# Peter's Pedigree



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# PETER'S PEDIGREE

BY

DOROTHEA CONYERS

AUTHOR OF "THE BOY, SOME HORSES, AND A GIRL," "THE THORN BIT," ETC.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY NORA K. SHELLEY

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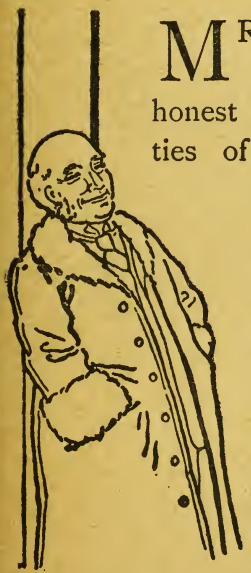
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# Peter's Pedigree

## CHAPTER I

### OF THE REIDYS AND THEIR NEW SERVANTS



Mr. Reidy.

MR. REIDY remarked with due emphasis that it was like an honest glass of whiskey after quanti ties of champagne which one got dining out.

He thrust his hands deep into the pockets of his expensive fur-lined overcoat, leant back against the door-post of Ballydane, and, beneath the coat of arms, wrought on the wall above, looked out on his native land. It was late September, clear-skyed and bright; light winds moved the branches of the massing trees, and urged tiny white clouds

across the sky. Mr. Reidy looked across expanse of park, dotted with old trees, then across thick woods and beyond to a range of uneven hills, springing like mountainy jack-in-the-boxes out of wide expanses of tableland. To his right lay the Dullen mountains, faintly purple, wreathed in silvery mist.

"I'll climb the rise after luncheon and look at the town," said Mr. Reidy softly. "My! to think of my father's son owner here, and the O'Neills scattered and dead. Well, it's a queer world, and money will take you to most places in it."

The signs of a recent arrival clung about Ballydane; scars marked the gravel, the tail of a luggage-laden cart wandered towards the yard; various servants appeared and disappeared, wrestling with remnants of luggage. The hall was littered with boxes, bags, gun-cases, fishing-rods, rugs, and magazines, and a distant clear voice demanded, in agitated notes, what the dickens, etc., had been done with the saddle case, which appeared to have vanished mysteriously, while kindly Irish voices could be heard proffering Gladstone bags, golf sticks, guns, and a canvas holdall as an equivalent. The last offer was apparently the final straw, for, as a voice

even more kindly than its fellows suggested opening this to see if the missing saddle might be within, the Saxon voice cut the suggestion short, thundered into upper notes, tailed into a string of bad language, and vanished somewhere behind a banging door, denouncing all Ireland and its sons as several sorts of fools.

"That's Peter," observed Mr. Reidy aloud, his mouth curving contentedly. Then, believing his wife to be in the hall close by, he inclined his head a little, and added, "Isn't it fine, dear?"

A hearty response caused him to wheel sharply. One of his new footmen was coming out, unstrapping the holdall, and clearly mastering a sense of injury because it did not contain the new saddle.

"H'm," said Mr. Reidy awkwardly.

"Ye'd think the dogs had to ate it," observed the man with manifest discontent. "Her ladyship the missus sir, sir, is convanient on one of the hall chairs. James me name is, sir, if ye want me; the English gintleman ye have brought is afther tellin' me I must be Cassidy now, as I have a white head on me." Here he wiped his floury hair with some sadness.

"Ye-es," said his master doubtfully. "Ye-es."

He had, when writing, stipulated that all the new footmen should be turned out with powdered hair. He looked again at his henchman Cassidy, smiled a little, and sought his wife, whom he found encamped near the wide staircase, looking about her dejectedly. As she was a born optimist this was unusual, but the prospect was disheartening. After the manner of the very rich, the Reidys had been "moved," going to London during the process and leaving everything to a commanding foreman and his small army of men, who engaged to have everything in its correct place on their arrival. The foreman had carried out his agreement without a flaw; the relative sizes of a Manchester villa and an old Irish mansion had been overlooked. Some black oak chairs, a table, and an umbrella stand camped in the dim old hall; the stair carpet was an apologetic line on the wide shallow staircase; four or five pictures dotted the expanse of newly papered wall.

"Oh, it's very nice," said Mrs. Reidy hastily. "Very nice. But a little large . . . for our things."

"Begad," said Mr. Reidy, studying the stair carpet, "it's all rather like Golden Locks in the big bear's bed."

Mrs Reidy rose and recovered her spirits.

"It's just a little small," she said. "Our own faults for not having seen the place and had the rooms measured. I never dreamt of so large a house. But" — she looked dubiously at the black oak which had done so well at Manchester —"the things don't seem to match somehow."

"It's like ourselves, or rather like me," said Mr. Reidy, with grim humour—"out of place."

He opened the drawing-room door. Here a Brussels carpet camped in the centre of a wide room, its edges flanked by various rugs. Some expensive gilt-legged furniture stood uneasily about, not unlike fielders put out for a fast bowler. China cabinets made little blots on the newly papered walls, and a small brass fender crouched before a mighty hearth, peering up at a white marble chimneypiece, covered with slightly dressed deities.

"There is no doubt," said Mrs. Reidy, looking round, "that building materials must have been very cheap when they made this house."

Mr. Reidy said nothing; he glued his nose to the big west window. It revealed a glimpse of a gliding silver river, slipping past the edge of the sloping lawn; a small thatched cottage clung to the far bank, thin spirals of smoke from its chimney staining the still air.

"There's nowhere like it on earth," said Mr. Reidy softly.

"Better wire to Hampton or Maple, or the lot of them, to send over a few shiploads of furniture to fill up the place," said a thoughtful voice from the door. "Seems to me that our lot is a bit lost."

"Peter," said his mother, turning.

Peter Reidy was a tall, slim youth, still in the medium twenties; his appearance, save for curiously pointed eyebrows, was pleasantly ordinary. At the present moment he carried a new saddle in his arms, and a good deal of dust on his face.

"Ran the case to ground in my bedroom," he went on. "A housemaid, who says her name is Bidelia, had laid it on my bed. I tried to induce her to gather the furniture into one corner, to save my walking from place to place, but she said, 'Glory! 'tis funnin' ye 're,' and went off."

His mother mildly remarked that he was extremely dirty. Peter loosed a hand, and having cheerfully rubbed his nose with it observed that unpacking was very dirty work, and he'd been through everything to find this saddle. He then said he was going to the stables

and strode out, vanishing round a clump of lordly evergreen oaks.

"He's born for it," said Mr. Reidy. "We'll make a county man of him, Norah, and then leave him here — to forget me." Here Mr. Reidy sniffed gently and retreated to his window.

Michael Reidy had been born in Cahirvally some fifty-five years before—to be accurate, born in a cabin close to Ballin village—and, until an American uncle had sent money for his education had run barefooted to school. Yet fate had elected to leave well-born men to poverty and turn Mr. Reidy into a millionaire. He had risen from step to step until his soap made half England hideous with the pictured tale of its virtues, and his yearly income ran into a dizzy network of figures.

His wife belonged to a very old Irish family, which, finding they could no longer keep a great many horses and drive a coach, had fled to England, where a man may live within a limited income without complete disaster to his position. Here Mrs. Reidy, growing into a placid silent girlhood, had met the then rising millionaire, and having been urged by an impoverished family to make the rest of their days pleasant to them,

had done so, and never regretted the step. Her husband having honestly avowed his origin to her before she chose.

Their only son, Peter, had been originally intended to head the great business, but Mr. Reidy grew weary of making money ; other ambitions grew as Peter was ground to manhood through the most expensive mills which could be found ; chief amongst them, a desire to see his home and live the rest of his life in his own country. Then, as if put there to help him, he saw Ballydane advertised in a quiet corner of a sporting paper ; the penny post and a cheque-book did the rest. The soap business was parcelled into shares for a greedy public, and a local Irish agent's head reeled beneath the load of orders he had to carry out. All things were to be ready, servants in the house ; Mr. Reidy stipulated for footmen with powdered heads—as things suitable to an old mansion—for gardeners, grooms, gamekeepers, and a house ready to come into, and though Mr. Donellan had aged visibly through the flurried month allotted him, he was by no means ill-pleased at his work. He had found a sufficiency of miscellaneous servants, and though workmen still clung to the back, the front of the house was finished.

To-day he had bowed the Reidys in, with many explanations, and had gone away hurriedly, with a light heart.

That very morning they had come swiftly westward through the clear autumn air, until Michael Reidy found himself once more in the dingy smoky station which he had steamed out of many years before, with a parcel containing his luggage on his knee and hope in his heart.

"You wouldn't know who we might marry Peter to," he mused, and then swung round amazed, as a great gong, hammered like an anvil, clashed through the silence. A hasty inspection revealed Cassidy, the footman, getting in his blows with a willing arm. He was checked by the horrified butler, who reft the stick from his grasp, and, as he filled the house with a swelling cadence, remarked bitterly that he thought the Irish would at least know how to ring a gong; but was assured in return by Cassidy that, though he'd lived in great houses, he'd never seen the like of that class of dinner-bell before, "an' sure he thought the more he n'ised it the finer 'twould be, an' the more 'twould hasten the quality." Cairns the butler dealt him a withering glance—quite lost, as Cassidy slid through the polished boards to open the dining-room door, remarking *sotto*

*voce* as he went, that an "odd tack in his shoe would be a great aise to him." The butler hailed from Manchester; the three heavily powdered footmen were part of Mr. Donellan's provision. One came from higher spheres, and was inclined to haughtiness, but two had been caught as opportunity came—for time was short, and there was "objection," as the registry woman remarked, "to the white heads." James Cassidy was a man of many parts—once pantry boy to Lord Clare, stable boy at Mr. Quin's, groom last to Sir James Magee, where, as he said, "he'd often change the clothes on him, an' whip in to give a hand to the maids"; this being verified, he was promoted to the post of third footman at Ballydane, with a new crimson livery and a powdered head.

Peter, meantime, had forgotten lunch and had made his way, saddle-laden, to the yard. It was a great straggling place, guarded by a deep archway, and had so far escaped the hurried repairs wrought upon the front. A collection of ladders clung to the high walls of the house, hung about with paint pots and ropes, and tenanted by carpenters and painters who seemed to find their principal occupation in the kitchen, or in quarrelling bitterly as to the present state of

Ireland, an argument which required much porter and rest if it was properly discussed. A couple of motors stood forlornly by an open door; smart carriages were huddled into a shed, as the coach-house roof was lacking; and the noses of English carriage horses, together with a cart-horse's patient hairy face, peered from a row of blistered doors. Peter went in to look; there were ranges of stables, old wooden mangers, tumbling walls, broken racks, and space for twenty steeds. In long-past days the O'Neills had hunted the hounds. Beyond a second archway he could see another yard, covered with coarse rank grass, rotting shed and cowhouses clinging to its high walls, and beyond still another, where wooden rick-stands stood forlornly bare.

"Hi," said Peter, coming back from his inspection.

"Hi!" His voice echoed back to him with a mocking note, and the workmen peered from their ladders.

"Hi," declared Peter again, this time with irritation, and a latent desire to get at the echo.

One of the men on the wall remarked that the young master seemed to be calling. Peter grew more irritated. Then to him across the yard

came no groom, but a dull, crimson-liveried footman, flakes of flour flitting down the breeze, the cover of an entrée dish peering from his breast. Peter recognised the man who had proffered him the holdall with such persistence, and awaited developments.

"An' I passin' the lobby windy I seen ye," announced Cassidy breathlessly. "Sure the min an Misther Magee's in to their dinners an' ye might be bawlin' here for a week, the kitchin's that far. I'll lay bail none of thim divils would light down," he pointed to a flight of steps at the end of a flagged track, and then directed a wrathful glance heavenwards, undeterred by an audible threat of a pound of wet paint on his head. "So, fearin' ye'd be left, I just med a twisht down meself." Here he removed the saddle from Peter's grasp, and was going off with it when a small, wizened individual with a severe face drifted leisurely up the steps, followed by Peter's chauffeur, who wore a look of absolute hopelessness.

"That's Misther Magee," said Cassidy.

"Can I do anything for ye, my lord?" inquired the head groom with dignity.

Peter smiled. He was young; he took the remark as bearing on his appearance; the bitter

truth was yet to be learnt. "It's my new saddle, Ma—Ma—ghee," he explained affably.

"Maghee! Lord save ye!" said Cassidy to himself.

"My new saddle. One I'm very particular about." Peter was filled with the pleasant sense of having made a good impression; the head groom was the person who later would admire his riding and compare it with that of the less fortunate men who had never seen a shire or galloped with the Pytchley. "It's full of new patents," he went on, indicating the now flour-streaked saddle.

"I don't hould with thim patents," said Magee sourly, clasping the saddle contemptuously. "Man alive"—here he turned on Cassidy—"ye'd need a flour-barrel with all ye waste. Yes sir, whin I was with the Marquis of Galway——" Here he paused to note the effect of his words.

"Yes," said Peter. "Yes, little red-headed chap, the son," he added half to himself.

Magee withered him with a glance. "His lordship was a great horseman, and a plain bit of leather, Mr. Reidy, is all that a good man wants betune his knees."

Peter observed thoughtfully that he thought a

horse might be useful, but was sufficiently cowed to render the remark inaudible.

"Not all thim patents to be distressin' a man with," finished Magee. "Neither his lordship the Marquis, nor his lordship Lord Dunnemore, nor the Honourable Mr. Knox, nor many more I might be mintioning, none of them was for thim newfangled things. But I come here to oblige, sir, an' I hope to do my best for ye," and here he stalked away.

"Seems to feel his new position," said Peter, whistling softly.

"That's only a manner he has on him," breathed Cassidy hurriedly. "Just to let ye see he was always in the high places. But there isn't his akels to care hunthers in all Munsther, an' 'twas lucky ye were to get him at all. He comes from Lord Dunnemore's beyant, but sure they had but the wan poor beast for all work, an' the sorra a wage he to see these years back, so maybe he'll be glad he left the quality an' come to ye."

"Per—haps," said Peter, eyeing Cassidy doubtfully.

"The lords isn't all," said Cassidy confidentially. "Whin I was panthry boy to Lord Clare, the dear knows twasn't all ye'd think, for

all their grandeur. An——" but at this moment his hand touched the dish-cover. "Holy powers," he wailed, "didn't I sthip the top off the sthewed kidneys just an' I seen ye from the windy, an' they 'arin' this half-hour on the ledge above!"—here he fled as one stricken.

"Useful footman," said Peter thoughtfully.

He stood by the archway as a painter, carrying a can and filled with the haste which only an Irish workman employed by the day can compass, slouched in, touching a green spotted cap, to stop, highly interested, by Peter's motors.

"Be dam, but 'tis the quare invintion!" he observed, fingering a car, "an' wontherful for haste; but for himself he preferred to have somethin' before him that'd see obstacles for itself, and"—memories of sundry drives behind his uncle's old horse troubled him—"surely ye'd feel a bit lonesome without the sthick."

Peter's chauffeur, who was standing by his machines, was quite incapable of judging; he looked mournful, and dusted aimlessly and uselessly.

"I seen one of thim to kill me A'nt's pig but lasht week," observed the painter, laying down the can and filling his pipe. "Laid it in bits

about the road, no less," he added, without emotion; "an' they are apt to be upset."

The chauffeur, his expression deepening, expressed faintly a sympathetic hope that the pig had been paid for.

"Paid for, is it?"—the painter spat with marked feeling. "Paid for? I can tell ye their watchin' wid the pigs below there now to dhrive thim across the road. Paid for, is it? Besides what we gother up and ate," he added thoughtfully.

The little Englishman looked wan, and, having engaged himself in a totally unnecessary inspection of bolts and bars, inquired still more faintly if the car had been upset.

The painter, having replied to a bitter query from the clouds as to whether "'twas hatchin' the paint he was," by a peaceful remark to the effect that "the breath was from him wid the haste he med," turned to reply. "Well, so they was," he said. "Maybe but for that we'd niver see the pig's price. But they came off aisy be raison of the old dung-heap they lighted in, soft an' comfortable."

"Christmas!" said the chauffeur weakly.

"'Twas not but August," said the painter in correction, raising his can and telling the stormy workers on the ladders to "be aisy"—he was

no motor-car himself. Having compassed this witticism, relighted his pipe, and paused twice to argue the point of haste with his friends, he slowly took to a ladder and to work.

Peter laughed softly as he left the yard; he had never been to Ireland before, and had scurried eager as a child from a rolling mail-boat to walk up and down among the soft-voiced helpers on Kingstown pier; had watched the world slide by as they tore westward, the mountains nosing skywards out of their misty beds; the clean stretch of small green fields, the brown, mysterious Allen bog running far away to a distant range of hills. He forgot his luncheon now, and leant across a wooden gate, thinking.

His father had bought Ballydane; for the long future these stretches of yellowing woods, these grasslands and humping hills would be his home, and the country he would hunt over lay beyond the streak of silver river. The old house towered behind him—a rambling, ugly structure, its windows dwindling as they ran upwards until those of the upper story blinked like half-shut eyes Peter rested and looked, wondering what his life would be in this new land, what happy days he would know riding over those green fields, and what the people would think of Peter Reidy. It

was peace personified out there—not a sound save the many-voiced arguments of the poultry yard, the bleat of distant sheep, the soft cawing of rooks as they circled round a line of great elms. Peter's heart warmed to it; he leant and thought, lost in a dreamy silence. . . .

"Holy Mary Joseph, protect an' save me!' rang in agonised shrillness in his ear, rudely breaking his reverie.



"There's the Brhamah cock schrapin' up the new flower gardin'."

Peter leaped spasmodically, then swung on swift heels, dimly conscious of a tense female figure wringing helpless hands. He started from his dream, ready to proffer help, to rescue some one from the death which seemed imminent, to show courage and resource.

"There's the Brhamah cock schrapin' up the new flower gardin'," finished the dairymaid with more reserve, her stout finger indicating a large

rooster who was energetically rooting up loose earth and presenting worms to his wives.

"Then why the *Dickens*, if that's all, couldn't you say so quietly?" demanded Peter sharply, grasping at his flurried nerves.

"Quitely, is it?" The damsel, who was very stout and short of breath, scaled the gate nimbly. "Quitely; an' I afther shuttin' the dour below on the schamers only this mornin'. Quitely, indade, ye'r honour, an' the breath knocked from me heart to see thim mischievin', and I passin' in thinkin' of nothin'."

Peter remarked that she still seemed to have some breath when she screamed.

"I tell ye," she declaimed, betraying a good deal of stout ankle, "that an' I above at her ladyship's Lady Clare's, she'd whip the nose from ye'r face an' ye let a fowl to threspess on the flower gardin'." Plucking a twig from a tree, she bundled on, calling down the vengeance of heaven on all Brahmahs as she went.

"Oh, I don't wonder the governor wanted to come home!" said Peter thoughtfully, recalling his luncheon and going in. Here he found the Manchester table and sideboard badly lost in an immense cold room, where a vast fire roared up the chimney, staying there. Cassidy, a little

flushed, was now waiting with due zeal. The new Irish cook possessed a large soul, and had provided roast beef, a turkey, and some chickens as a light luncheon. The cooled kidneys, with a fine glaze on their surface, were untouched.

Peter's father and mother had finished, but his friend Digby Carstairs, still pale from the effects of the crossing, was lunching heavily on brandy and a dry biscuit. Carstairs was a little white-haired youth with a highly-pitched voice and a precise manner. He answered or tore up the extra mass of correspondence which the burden of his riches brought Mr. Reidy, and was now filled with a burning desire to learn to hunt. He raised his head as Peter came in, and observed peevishly that he thought Ireland looked empty.

Peter returned that he thought anything might present that appearance—to Carstairs—at present, and embarked simultaneously on some tepid beef and a long dissertation of the possibilities of the roomy stables. A few days ago he had looked on horses as mere aids to wintry pleasure; now he had been some hours in Ireland, they were crying necessities, and filled his soul. Mr. Reidy, who looked nervous, said he meant to write to Mathew, the big dealer, and he advised Peter to

do the same; but Peter shook his head—there was a twist of trade-like economy in his composition which made this plan distasteful. He liked, above all things, value for his money, and would save a fiver and squander five hundred with strange inconsistency. He meant, he observed, waving aside Cassidy, who made troubled advances with the cold kidney, to buy from the farmers. He'd have the fun of making his own horses, he'd get better animals for a smaller price, and it would be a popular proceeding with the people he was to dwell among.

Mr. Reidy shook a doubtful head, preserving boyish recollections of the Irishman who sells a horse, but he said nothing; to have doubted Peter's wisdom would have been a serious matter. Mrs. Reidy smiled silently, but from custom, not amusement.

His tepid meal over, Peter rose, and sent the haughtily inclined footman upstairs for his cap, Mr. Reidy inquiring, as his son left the room, if he had seen the head groom, and Peter, with wrinkling nose, replying that he had. The footman, panting from a hasty ascent and an over-lively encounter with Peter's dog, which followed him suspiciously, handed the cap with a "Here, m' lord," and, on observing Peter's

face, begged pardon, but he had just left Lord Granagh's and——

"Oh, quite so," said Peter equably, taking the cap. "I'll get used to it soon." He then summoned Carstairs, bidding him leave his heavy lunch and acquire an appetite for tea.

They went across the wide green park, striking into the woods beyond; Peter chattering volubly, Carstairs, still too shaken to be pleasant, trotting by his side. As they plunged through the thick undergrowth they were confronted by a keeper and his attendant satellite. There was nothing left to shoot in the O'Neills' old home, but Mr. Donellan had been faithful to his instructions—no establishment was complete without a gamekeeper. Further, thinking of his own prestige, he had endeavoured, as far as possible, to secure men and women who had lived with the "nobillity." Peter was beginning to find this out. Byrne, the gamekeeper, touched his cap hastily, and began a pleasant babble of future pheasants and partridges, winding up with a faint suggestion of present rabbits. Peter was enthusiastic; he plunged into the conversation with animated ignorance, and was talking very fast when a chance word checked him, Byrne remarking, in answer to a suggestion, that "he thought it

wouldn't do, for whin he was above at Lord Carberry's——"

"Another," said Peter blankly.

Byrne, who was innocent of intent to impress, begged pardon with a puzzled expression. But, ere he had time to continue, Peter made some hasty remark as to getting used to it, caught his small companion by the arm and strode hurriedly on, leaving the gamekeeper scratching a puzzled head and remarking to his attendant boy, that he thought the young Misther Reidy was a trifle lightsome in the head.

"I'm getting tired of it," said Peter, as he strode on. "Good heavens, Car, they might have got us a servant or two who wouldn't have tried to impress us. Cassidy, late Jamsey; the dairy-maid, the groom, the other footman, the game-keeper—all full of where they've been. Good heavens, when I go to bed to-night I'll have the fat housemaid asking me if I like a fire same as his lordship always did, and telling me I'm 'funnin'' if I refuse. H'tt!" said Peter, walking faster, and striking angrily at the undergrowth.

They skirted a grey boundary wall, crumbling in places, until they reached a narrow gate leading out on to a road; a padlock hung on a rusty hasp, but the gate leant against the wall wearily,

propped permanently open, and they passed through it on to a narrow country road. Carstairs, who was fatigued, sought immediate rest on a low stone wall, and Peter, after a moment's gloomy reflection, followed him. As he found the least uncomfortable spot on the loose shifting stones, a bicycle whizzed round the corner, its hind tyre trailing emptily, and was stopped close to them. Its rider, a mild-looking little man in clothes of uncertain origin, jumped off, fumbling at the flabby rubber; he then produced a pump, and was looking for a prop when Peter rose and offered to hold the machine upright for him. The little man eyed him curiously as he accepted the offer.

"You're the people who've bought Ballydane, aren't you?" he queried.

"Well, I'm one of them," observed Peter, with reserve.

"Quite so, one of them;" with the air of a man who was used to being corrected, the little stranger knelt in the dust and pumped, the tyre rising slowly. "And how do you like Ireland?" he asked breathlessly.

Peter said he liked what he had seen greatly, but they had only just arrived.

"Oh, if you care for sport you'll be very happy,"

said the little man, growing scarlet from his exertions. "And you'll like the people."

Here Peter interrupted him, with contracted brows. "The people," he said—"Oh, I'd like them well enough if they weren't all lords and we hadn't got all their servants. Is there nothing over here between a title and a beggar?" He asked the question dramatically.

"Often, very little," said the little man softly, but with amused blue eyes.

"Or do ordinary people keep no servants?" pursued Peter, rather full of his wrongs and all his superior henchmen.

"Well, not quite that either," said the stranger, rising, the twinkle deepening and comprehension on his face.

"Well, I've met a few in England, but I'm sick of the very name of a lord to-day," said Peter gloomily—"sick of it. Are you all right? Will it hold?"

"I've not got far to go," said the stranger, contemplating the tyre doubtfully and nodding at some woods about a mile away. "I'm a neighbour of yours"—he hopped, putting one foot on the step—"Lord Rochfort," he added mildly, with a suspiciously grave face, as he touched his cap and wheeled away.

"Crums!" said Peter inelegantly. "That's a good way to begin to propitiate the people. Crums!" he said again, suddenly overcome with laughter, and sat down heavily on the stone wall; the stones broke from the impact, and as Peter recovered himself, Carstairs was carried with the stony flood into the field beyond, remonstrating feebly as he went. "But how was I to know?" cried Peter, unheeding his friend's misfortunes. "How was I to know?—they none of them mentioned that name. The only thing I think of is that he's never had a servant, because if he had, some of them would have been sure to have been sent to us."

"Possibly," observed Carstairs wanly, from the hail of stones which accompanied him. "Oh, very possibly. Anything is possible—here."

"Let's go home," said Peter, mingling laughter and irritation. "I'm beginning to think I've had enough of Ireland already."

## CHAPTER II

### OF HOW THE COUNTY CALLED, AND AN INTRODUCTION

THE Reidys began to settle down in their new home, Mr. Reidy absolutely happy, Mrs. Reidy's placid peace broken by the vagaries of the supplied servants—interludes when the cook, who somewhat resembled two cotton-clad barrels roped together by apron-strings, would tear up unbidden to announce that "the misthress must descend forthwith to sphake to Molly the dairy-maid," who was "afther givin' her betthers the top of impertinence, high an' low," followed by an agitated meeting with the aggrieved Molly, who declared hotly that she was waiting on her ladyship, Mrs. Reidy, to formally declare that "the divil's own daughter couldn't bide with the cook, or sthomach the words she'd sphake"; all this tempest, sadly received by Mrs. Reidy, ending by a vision of cook and dairymaid going off together to doctor a sick

calf, arm in arm, as though they had never known a difference.

The people of Cahirvally in the meantime began to consider the question of calling; the Hunt secretary thought of the hunt subscription, county people with daughters thought of the millionaire's son, and as aristocratic brains were being racked, there came an advance guard of kindly folk who did not represent the county—a wave of seedy dogcarts and old carriages, the latter invariably tenanted by old ladies with strong accents and patronising manners, who talked a great deal of their several families. Amongst other arrivals were the Miss Clancys, and their married sister, who eyed Peter with visible sadness. The youngest, a buxom red-haired damsel, allowed the others to talk of their country home as she led Peter to a distant corner of the drawing-room, where she confided many things to his willing ears—of the fine fox-hunting he would know in the winter, of the pleasures of Cahirvally town—here she hinted that, if he was down the street on Saturday, he might give her tea at Miss Muldooney's and they could do a twist round afterwards. Peter, who was enjoying himself, promised immediately, as to both twist and tea.

The Clancys finally rose to leave as a collection of elderly ladies, who stared at the damsels with open scorn, were announced; Peter gathering the information, that "these ones were the Daylys, queer old frights, who thought the world and all of themselves because they owned Dayly's Castle and a few grandfathers, though they had but one horse after all, and never seeing meat unless they'd kill a chicken."

Peter deducing from this speech an absence of Clancy grandfathers, and a large supply of horses and butcher's meat. Miss Clancy also hinted, with delicacy, that if Mr. Reidy was looking for hunters, her brother had a couple he'd sell, to oblige—free, able to leap mountains and skim lakes, or crawl down precipices, and beat the fox, if needs be, for speed. Peter took a note of these and watched the damsels leave, driving a very skittish mare; then he stroked a thoughtful brow and went to the smoking-room.

Here he remained with his father, until two hunting men were passed on to him, who smoked expensive cigars with enjoyment, and talked hunting without stint. There was no country like Cahirvally, no hounds as theirs, no fences like the great green banks, the flying stone walls, no hills so harmless as the line cutting across the

valleys. And they also had horses for sale proffered delicately. They were followed by a third hunting man, named Harrison, a big handsome young fellow, clothed in a shabby coat and a genial manner, who talked of hounds and horses till Peter's cheek was aglow with enthusiasm.

Cassidy came in later to put coal on the fire, and, as he arranged it artistically with his fingers he responded to questions concerning the callers. "The fust two," he said, "was Misther Doyle an' Misther O'Grady, the divil's two to folly the dogs, as they'd ate the faces from ache other in a hunt. The divil such pastin' iver ye'd see as they'd begin to ride, an' 'twas hard to say which of thim could curse the longest"—this was clearly a recommendation. "For the other, he was young Misther Harrison, sore set to kape Mount Harrison above his head. Hadn't he half the front windys shuttered to kape the blasht out, and the flower garding sot with carrots? But 'tis the man he is," declaimed Cassidy admiringly, "an' maybe 'twas as well he was shutther with all the ould wimin in the place pestherin him to pay for their hins an' their ducks. Begob, he's that venturesome, tis akel to him what ways the dogs run, so long as he can make off at topmosht

spheed and take the greatest leps he can find. I minds often to see him, an' I out meself. An' there's the masther, he'll be comin' later, the grand little felly, but he'd swheep ye straight up to hivin if ye vexed him, the blasht ov words 'd come so lightsome from him. I seen him, but lasht year, to sind Dick Hanlon home from the hunt; when Dick, bein' a bit eagerlike, made off after the fox out of Ballingrave covert, without waitin' for the dogs to quit the furry bushes. There was near a bit burnt out of the back of Dick's coat with the hate of all the hells that wint afther him. Faix, he wasn't out for a week," said Cassidy thoughtfully. "An' for ladies, the divil wouldn't bate thim. There's Miss Green with the foxy hair, that 'd face the Cahir in flood, if the dogs did. An' Mrs. Rivers, an' Miss Rochfort, the lord's daughter—but she never has a horse to ride, an' her ould ladyship, Lady Rochfort, for all the world like a sack wolloping across the counthry. Oh, but 'tis the grand place, sir, an' 'tis fine times ye'll have."

Here Cassidy sighed and went to less congenial duties, though Peter would have listened for an hour. Magee, the head groom, was still supercilious, but Peter, observing how the carriage horse bloomed, bore contempt meekly.

Peter was filled with the joys of the country; he was going to buy horses, a pleasant occupation when one's purse is bottomless; he was going to bathe in sport of every class. There was nothing save a few rabbits in his own wood, but his eager eyes scanned the brown boglands across the river —all the more eagerly, as the gamekeeper assured him that they were strictly preserved. Byrne's brain was filled with the blissful future when Ballydane itself would be worth a poacher's notice. But Cassidy, who was a man of many parts, came to the rescue; if given permission to doff the crimson livery, he promised to take Peter by bog and field, by cunning paths which should never lead them into mischief, and to other spots where he promised that half-a-crown would settle all. For himself, he considered it to be no game to knock birds horrooshed across ye'r gun's muzzle, but to sthale on one unbeknownst was true sport.

So Peter and Carstairs went forth, and got a good deal of exercise and a certain amount of other people's plover and snipe. The paths were not always as clever as Cassidy would have led them to believe. October was wet and soft, the brown-hued pools were full, the skies grey above them. Peter learnt to love the land and the ready hospitality of the people, who would

give them tea in their kitchens, brush clucking broods of chickens from about their feet, and regale them on hot soda loaf and salt butter, or the colder comfort of baker's bread and cheap jam, never marred by an apology; while Carstairs, who invariably fell into at least one of the bog pools, dried himself at the glowing turf fires.

Now the Reidys had never expected the Cahirs to call, but urged by her lord, who possessed a due respect for millions, and by her son, who had met Peter in England, Lady Cahir reluctantly murmured "Ballydane" to a footman, and having been driven there, was ushered, still feebly reluctant, into the great half-furnished drawing-room, to find Mrs. Reidy alone. Lady Cahir was a pretty, faded woman, too much oppressed by her kindness in calling to exert herself, and her daughters were oppressed by their wide distance apart on the scattered chairs. So the conversation languished, hideously, Mrs. Reidy being habitually silent. There was a diversion caused by the hurried entrance of an unwished-for tea, and by Thomas the second footman, who was nervous, plunging over Lady Doreen's foot and muttering "Hivins above me!" as he shot a plate of bread and butter into space. Mrs. Reidy, awakening, hoped that no harm had been done,

and felt sure—with a desire to solace the crimson Thomas—that he would have missed the foot if it were possible.

At this point Thomas fled to return no more, the injured lady fell to laughing softly, and Peter, with a dead pheasant in his hand and Carstairs and Harrison at his heels, swung into the room. He shied the pheasant on to an expensive chair was introduced, and conversation centred itself in the dead bird.

Oh no, he hadn't got them in their woods, he said ; they were out shooting, and as they came home saw the fellow perched by a big gateway, about three miles off. Peter was alone at the time, and he let drive ; as luck would have it it fell on the road. "But I suppose it was some one's place," said Peter, munching hot cakes and caviare sandwiches with impartial hunger.

"It was *ours*," said Lady Cahir faintly, with a Saxon horror of anything poached.

It was at this point that Peter's strange twist of economy strained matters sadly : he promptly took up the body and urged it upon the lady declaring that the only thing for her to do was to take it home and, later, eat it.

Lady Cahir raised her glasses ; Harrison

spluttered and tried to look as if he'd choked, and Peter, blandly affable, held out his poached prey.

"I'll put him in your carriage," he said.

"I—I assure you," Lady Cahir wrestled for words. "I assure you, Mr. Reidy. The pheasant—even if he is ours—I do not—wish — want," here she broke down beneath the battery of Peter's smile and rose hurriedly.



Lady Cahir raised her glasses.

Peter, faintly troubled, saw them out. "Sure you won't have him? I couldn't resist shooting him." Peter put Lady Doreen into her coat tenderly, with the bird tucked under his arm. The girl smiled softly and assured him that she was quite sure; also she hoped that he might shoot their pheasants —later on—on the right side of the wall.

"Thanks awf'lly," said the unabashed Peter,

"but I do wish you'd take this one—he'd be just enough——"

"Home," said Lady Cahir, with unwonted rapidity, remarking as they drove on that she really thought young Mr. Reidy was a little mad.

Peter went in to find Harrison doubled up with much laughter. Ignoring this, he looked round the half-furnished room and inquired if his mother had made any explanation as to the furniture.

"Dear me, no," said the lady placidly. "They all found chairs to sit on. Oh, Peter, how glad I was when you came in to talk to them!"

"And offer them a dinner—off their own pheasant"—Harrison raised a purple face—"Just enough—Oh, Peter!—Their first call——"

"Well, the old lady was so distressed I thought she must want him," said Peter, unruffled.

Harrison, who knew the Cahirs, collapsed again just as Mr. Reidy passed through the hall, read the names on the new cards, and entered chuckling.

"It's all right now," he said happily. "They've got the county in leading strings. I tell you, Martha, we'd be a long time in Manchester before I'd come home and find an earl in the card-basket."

Peter remarked, thoughtfully, that it was possible; Harrison showed symptoms of a relapse, and Mr. Reidy espied the pheasant, which again reposed on a gilded chair.

"Where did you get the bird?" he inquired.

"Oh, he's one of the Cahirs' pheasants," said Harrison quickly.

"And did they bring him—a present?" queried Mr. Reidy with astonishment.

"No, I brought him a present—off the wall," said Peter.

"I don't quite understand," said Mr. Reidy blankly.

"Well, neither did Lady Cahir," said Peter, going out with the pheasant.

Which, three nights later, they ate themselves.

Next day Peter began his first experience of horse-dealing in Ireland. He was half-way through lunch when there was a whisper of a horse outside, and food became of secondary importance. He fled to the door, followed by Cassidy. The month was October, and time was short. His father had written to a well-known dealer—the result, the arrival of four magnificent weight carriers, guaranteed to carry an elderly gentleman anywhere; but Peter would have none of this high-handed

buying, he wanted to make his own, and consequently was inundated by a flood of horses, most of them quite impossible. His judgment was harassed by Carstairs, who also wanted a horse, but had studied a certain book until he determined to buy nothing that could not come up to its standard. An inch tape was his constant equipment, and he took aggravating journeys about woolly legs, to return with a grave face and a tale of lacking bone: nothing was quite ideal to a man who went by books.

The mare at the door took Peter's fancy; she was a well-made brown, showing more quality than substance, but with a wear-and-tear look about her, quarters well let down, and clean, flat legs. She was unkempt, unclean, and apparently but half broken. Magee, the head groom, a bit in his hands, looked at her with a silent sourness which was distinctly trying.

"Trot her down," commanded Peter.

"Come on, ye schamer," said the owner, pulling the bridle over the animal's head. "Beckon at her behind there," he added in a whisper to Cassidy, who was standing on the doorstep, quite oblivious of his duties in the dining-room.

Cassidy beckoned with such fervour, that the

mare departed on her fore legs, her hind ones flourishing airily. She then settled down, trotting with level ease. Mare and owner came clattering back, the latter distinctly wrong in the wind.

"She moves well." Peter turned a glowing face to the head groom.

"She'd draw a hack cyar—nicely," said that worthy; "'tis all she's fit for."

Peter's face fell. He wanted horses, and with the enthusiasm of the young he wanted to buy them himself, and make them himself, and reap the glory of it later, not starting in Cahirvally as a cockney sportsman who could go on expensive perfection.

"Do ye expect a mare with them quarthers to lep?" said Magee, noting the effect of his words. Carstairs, standing by sucking a mild cigarette, looked on and stared, wondering vaguely what manner of beasts he would eventually find beneath his saddle. He seemed to be left out of the horse-dealing. "With thim quarthers, to lep?" repeated Mr. Magee.

"Lep, is it? Lep?" With the velocity of a mountain torrent bucking over a waterfall, Cassidy the footman broke in. "Lep, is it, Misther Magee? An' I runnin' a day lasht year wid the hunt I see her lep; an' she shweepin'

great banks that lively she'd niver lay the foot to them. Didn't she make at the bounds bank out of Borris, and 'twould hearten ye to see the fly she med. Signs by, be raisin' of the whole thing bein' too big to clear, she wint into the ditch beyant an' was out before ye could sneeze, and away. An' for walls—she lept the big one below"—here he pointed to the mortared wall of the yard some modest fifteen feet high—"an' didn't I——"

The owner dropped the mare's bridle, tearing round to the orator with a desire for swift murder printed on his face. "May the divil roast ye, Jamsey Cassidy," he breathed in an undertone; "an' I tellin' his honour she'd lay the legs on a knife blade if ye put a taste of grass on it to decaive her into thinkin' 'twas a bank. Wid yer bound finces an' ye'r flyin'——"

Peter interposed at this point, and suggested seeing the mare jump. There were fences of all classes just across the road. Donovan, the owner, heaved a sigh of relief, abandoned the doing to death of Cassidy and took the bridle over his arm.

"Sure that gommach, Jamsey Cassidy, is talkin' the height of nonsinse," he averred. "Wid the idee of plazin, becaise his people an'

mine are neighbours. The day he sphakes of the mare was young an' leppin' mad, an' the finces pastimes to her. Playin' wid thim she was." Here he flung a terrible glance at the abashed Cassidy, who was sneaking after them.

"Where shall we take her to?" asked Peter, with a faint hope of conciliating Magee.

"That's akel to me, Master Pether," observed Magee with dignity. "Whin they carries ye home with a neck broken, maybe ye'll listen to me judgment."

"Perhaps," said Peter dubiously. "If they can resuscitate me to hear it."

Observing sternly that "thim long foreign words had no meaning for him," Magee pocketed the bit and his pride and came with them down the avenue.

"I'd give me place," said Cassidy, still pursuing, regardless of his dull crimson dress, "to see if she'll lay a leg to thim banks. The grandest lepper she is, ye'r honour, the bounds gate wouldn't sthop her. . . . May I come, sir?"

"Oh, come along," said Peter.

Cassidy, remarking joyously that "he'd clap a cap on the powther an' be afther thim like a shot," fled to the house, all eyes for the dreaded sight of the English butler; then, his dull crimson coat

flying in the breeze and a light trail of flour in his wake, he pursued them down the park. Just beyond the front gate of Ballydane the road is fenced by a high awkward double, with a wide ditch outside. Peter asked if she could go in there. Magee made sounds of contempt between his teeth, while Carstairs scaled the bank to peer into the wet depths beyond and think, if all Irish obstacles were as this one, that it was not the land of his dreams.

But the mare's owner was nothing loath; he took her back across the road. With a shuffling rush she made for the fence, rose at it like a deer, dropped light as a feather on the narrow top, to shoot with feet to spare into the field beyond, the triumphant Mr. Donovan calling out some word referring to topping banks and liars as he landed.

"But whin the pace was with her she could shweep that same like a swally," declaimed Cassidy, as he bundled over the fence, a damnatory streak of green marring his crimson breeches. He was still imbued with the idea that he was singing the brown's praises. "Gallop her, let ye, Tim," he piped, "till his honour sees how far she can fly."

Here Mr. Donovan was understood to remark

with emphasis that he wished Jamey Cassidy an his likes would fly to the divil and remain there permanently; but, as he took fence after fence, it was evident that he and his mount knew their work. There were "leps" of every description round Ballydane, and the mare was ready for them all, generally helped over by a screech and a sounding thump of an ashplant on her quarters. She slid and doubled and flew perfectly, until even Magee, watching her performances, unbent sufficiently to remark that "if she was thrimmed up, she might make a chape sort of a hunther."

After a short time Peter got up himself. The mare was a good ride, she moved easily, giving her head to the snaffle bit. They flew a low stone wall, took a narrow bank, negotiated with a quick change which was marvellously comforting, and then slipped on, seeking for something fresh. The slope was with them, Peter took the brown by the head, the pace increasing to a reaching gallop, until they swept down the long narrow field at a broad bank, far bigger than anything they had encountered. The mare cocked willing ears; Peter put his hands down cheerily, his eyes lighting to the pace, while Magee, left far behind, shrilled warning words, lost on the breeze. The brown mare sprang into



Moira Rochfort.

her stride, shooting well on the wide bank like a bolt from an equine catapult ;—then came swift disaster, for outside was a running stream, deep and chill.

The mare snorted wildly, afraid of the water ; missed her legs, and slipped down the bank, poising there in an almost perpendicular attitude, so that Peter, quite unprepared, quitted the saddle, to shoot into the next field right to the feet of two people walking quietly up by the fence, the mare, after a struggle or two toppling over into the trench.

"Good—Oh!" said a girl's astonished voice.

"What the—dickens!" growled a deeper note.

The two stood aghast, for as Peter struggled, dazed, a figure in dull crimson livery bundled on the fence, cleared the ditch with a bound and came to the rescue, followed quickly by a



country man in ragged clothes, and a neat little man in light tweeds, brightened by a vivid green tie.

"Begonnes!" said the owner, as he dived for his wet mare.

"Gripes," declared Mr. Cassidy, proceeding to raise Peter. "Ye wint too shlow at it. Av ye were to give her head an' the sthick she'd clear it all without a foot to it."

Peter rose, distinctly shaken, to confront a small girl with amused blue eyes, which he seemed to have seen before, and a heavy clean-shaven man, somewhere in the early forties, with curly hair and a look of assertive gentility.

"You—you—jumped that well," said the girl, suddenly gurgling into palpable laughter.

Peter remarked ruefully that he appeared to have done so, explaining with diffidence that he had not allowed for so sudden a stop.

Here the girl grew graver, and supposed politely that Peter was Mr. Reidy; Peter acknowledging his name with an absent-minded clutch at his capless head, his cap having fallen into the ditch.

"I am Miss Rochfort," said the girl. "I think—you've met—seen my father." Here she smiled again. "You see you've just jumped our

bounds fence. And this"—she turned to her companion—"is Mr. Saunders, my cousin," she added irrelevantly.

Peter once more clutched absently at his bare head, and, ere he could speak, Cassidy was at his ear. "If ye've any use for a cap, sir," he breathed in an audible whisper, "would ye have an objection to mine? I think 'tis the masther's, for I whipped it off the stand in the hall, an' be rasin of the flour 'twas niver near me head at all."

"Get the mare out, you fool," said Peter softly, furious; "and find my cap."

He saw that Saunders was regarding him with a coldly critical eye, while Miss Rochfort had again succumbed to laughter. Cassidy, abashed, commenced to urge the brown mare to "quit the thrinch," and Magee, much blown but smiling, appeared on the bank. He reserved his conversation, and merely touched his cap when he saw Miss Rochfort.

"Seems a useful sort of person, your—er—footman," said Saunders, with a drawling superiority."

"He is," said Peter equably; "most useful—and obliging." Here he met Miss Rochfort's eyes and smiled. "Does most things except his own work," he added solemnly.

Saunders smiled in the aggravating fashion when a man's mouth seeks acquaintance with his nose, and Cassidy was heard to confide to the mare that "if she did not quit the thrinch without delay he'd flay the flesh from off her bones." This threat seemed effective, for the brown scrambled, dripping, from her watery resting place, the splashes failing to enhance the beauty of the crimson livery. They were standing in a long field, sloping to an avenue, once guarded by a line of fine old trees, stumps marking where they had been; at the end of the avenue a hideous grey house frowned at the landscape. The evening was very still; peaceful rooks cawed insistently, circling against the grey, barred sky.

"And now," said Peter, patting his bruised limbs, "I had better try to jump back again."

But Miss Rochfort told him that it was quite impossible to return by the way he had come; the bank was too high to jump, and he must come across the field and go out by the gate. "You see you are a trespasser," she remarked, without severity.

"A novel one," grinned Peter, as, having hooked Carstairs across, he introduced his little friend, rather ruffled—for he had landed on his

nose, and was obliged to respond politely from that position. "I thought," added Peter reflectively, "that one could not trespass in Ireland."

"Think we've no law or order here, I suppose," said Saunders impressively, as they walked on. "Think that of us, eh?" He meant it as a general remark, but Peter and Miss Rochfort had forged ahead. "Think that of us, eh?" he repeated in superior tones to Carstairs, who was wrestling with his disordered tie.

"Never thought about you at all," said Carstairs, with hasty but guileless truth.

Mr. Saunders said "H'm" suspiciously as he overtook the two ahead.

"But you ought not to make mistakes about the Irish, Mr. Reidy," he continued, staring at Peter.

"My father ought not to," said Peter with quiet directness. "He was born in a cottage here. I'm an alien, enduring the process of grafting. See?"

Saunders grew slightly red, and Miss Rochfort saw—thoughtfully. Then, as Peter swung open a gate, in response to her cousin's suggestion that it was time to go in, she remarked that she meant to show Mr. Reidy the way to the end—it was rather plainly visible at the end of

the long straight avenue—and walked on with the procession; Mr. Saunders, stroking his long upper lip, following reluctantly. As they walked down the rutty track—it was little more—they heard the sound of wheels, and a carriage lumbered into view. It was of the convertible species, dating from prehistoric days, with large coats-of-arms emblazoned on the panels; further, it was drawn by a bright yellow horse, who roared lustily as he plodded on, and appeared to miss the plough which ought to have followed his unkempt tail.

The rickety window went down with a crash, a stern head popping out; behind this majestic appearance was a shadowy glimpse of a very old face, dominated by piercing eyes.

"Mother!" muttered Moira breathlessly.

"Moira!" rumbled Lady Rochfort in awful tones, "Who——?"

Miss Rochfort blushed. "It's Mr. Reidy, mother," she explained incoherently. "He came in—on his head—by mistake—and is going out because he couldn't jump back that way, and——"

Peter again clutched at his head, but was sublimely ignored.

"I told you, Moira. I most expressly told

you . . "—the thunderous voice rumbled into indistinctness, and Moira, listening, grew pinker and pinker. Having finally rumbled out that this was final, she bade the coachman drive on.

A shrill old voice promptly ordered him to wait.

"An' which of ye'r ladyships am I to mind?" queried the old man mildly, tickling the yellow horse with his broken whip. But he stood still.

A very old face eclipses the thunderous middle-aged one at the window, looking at the group—wet mare, capless Peter, crimson-liveried powdered footman, mild little Carstairs.

"How do you do, Mr. Reidy?" she said.

It was a very aristocratic old voice, making Peter think instinctively of dead dames who had died in France beneath the guillotine. Perfect features still showed on the wrinkled face; the skinny little throat was wound about with a string of jewels; the tiny claw he bent over, laden with rings. "You may come to see me," said the old lady. "I live at Borrisdenae. I knew . . . never mind. Come to see me."

"Borrisdenae," remarked Peter thoughtfully. "Why, I think my grandfather was steward there. Wasn't he?"

"Quite right," said the old lady, nodding a

pleased head. "And a most decent man. That was why I asked you. Now I ask you for yourself. You'll do, young man."

"I'll try to," said Peter modestly, stifling a smile.

"Drive ON," rumbled thunderously from the far window.

The yellow horse moved forwards in obedience to a violent chuck in the mouth, while Moira Rochfort, very pink-cheeked, examined the avenue with minute interest.

"My mother——" she began.

"Doesn't approve—of us," finished Peter.

"And that's my grandmother. No one knows how old she is; no one dares to contradict her. Not even mother. I can't imagine what made her speak like that," said Miss Rochfort unhappily. "She's half French, and quite unlike any one."

"Well, goodbye," said Peter, seeing the girl's visible embarrassment. "You must forgive my call, Miss Rochfort. It was quite unintentional."

"And—original," said Miss Rochfort gravely. "I shall never forget our meeting."

"I don't think *I* ever shall," said Peter quietly, receiving a distant bow from the cousin and a friendly handshake from the girl. They walked

on rapidly through the growing dusk. The avenue gate was iron, once painted green, and hung on broken hinges. The lodge was shut, blinking dreary windows at them behind a lacing tangle of rank briars. They turned up the road to Ballydane, a soft wind whipping their faces; grey clouds piled high in the darkening sky, the west orange-tinted as the sun sank behind ragged clouds.

Cassidy trotted beside them full of information. "Her ladyship, Lady Rochfort," he assured them, "was the crossest lady in all Cahirvally, an' the proudest, an' they as poor as the rats in the ricks. Would ye belave it, ye'r honour, sora the maid they have but one an' a panthry b'y, an' the ould lad ye saw guidin' the carriage, that ploughs an' all for them. An' not a pinny left but just to be cuttin' the trees an' livin' on them an' atin' the fish an' the rabbits. There isn't a soul for miles round but 'd go on their knees to Miss Moira or his lordship, nor one that wouldn't whip the nose off her ladyship if they had the chance. For she'll talk that big an' she out, of her footmin an' her maids no less. Wasn't Biddy, me cousin, there for years, an' often she'd tell me she was wearied out from thryin' to come afther the big house, upstairs an down, an' tired from tuckin' ould

clothes to match the b'y that'd open the door. An' they do say Miss Moira is to marry Misther Saunders, he bein' the heir, an' a cross soort of a man, more be tokens."

Here the mare's owner broke in with a mild inquiry as to whether his honour meant to be afther buyin', recalling Peter to the business of the day.

He bought the brown mare, after a brief bargain; her price was not a high one, and even Magee failed to grumble at the news. "She was betther than her looks," he said grudgingly, "an' not too high priced if she passed the vet."

"Even if she isn't sound I mean to keep her," said Peter softly into the brown's unkempt mane.

"Why?" inquired Carstairs shrilly, inclined to enlarge on the strange manners of the Irish. "Why?"

"I—I hardly know why," observed Peter, with unwonted gentleness. "But, whatever happens I'll keep this brown mare."

## CHAPTER III

### CONCERNING SOME TRAINS AND A LADY'S LAP

HAVING endured several remarks from Cassidy to the effect that "if he wasn't afther hurryin', he'd be apt to miss the thrain," Peter was scurrying along the road to Oonagh, with Cassidy, who had ousted the groom, perched behind. Peter's whole being was merged in a dream of horse; he had just bought another, a great upstanding grey, with a deep girth, fine shoulders, magnificent quarters, and an ugly Roman-nosed head, which he carried poked to earth. His owner had confided—in undertones, as though he feared the very bushes might hold an over-eager buyer—that "there was thim in the counthry that would leap at his likes," and Peter's rash desire for bargains sprung into new life. Also he was told that "there wasn't a place or a thing in the county that'd sthop the grey"—bitter truth, as Peter learnt later. Even Magee, looking critically at the horse, could find nothing wrong except his head.

Cassidy, who drifted down the steps with a silver spoon, some plate-powder, and a selvyt cloth, was the only dissentient. His face grew puzzled as he saw the grey horse. "I minds, I minds," he murmured, "to having seen that one somewheres; 'tis like a dhrame to me," and the owner, showing a clear distaste for dreams, moved hurriedly away, suggesting a trial across country. Cassidy was left behind, looking pensive and rubbing vaguely, and the bargain was concluded beyond the gate.

Now Peter, musing about his new purchase, recalled the ugly position of its head, and promptly put it down to bad riding and an oversevere bit. He chattered cheerily of his purchase, Carstairs unresponsive and listening sourly. He had appeared on all occasions with his inch tape and correct measurements, to be swept aside without a word. So far, all his carefully acquired knowledge seemed valueless.

Peter was too pleased with himself to heed the little man; five years, sixteen hands, with a lengthy pedigree dating back, as every self-respecting Cahirvally horse's does, to Solon Arthur or Victor, Peter felt that he had done well. The horse was undoubtedly handsome, in

fact almost perfection—a hunter to dream of but seldom see. He now remained to endure examination, the owner averring that "all the vits in wide Munsther couldant pick a hair asthray in him," and Peter flicked the pony, babbling happily.

"It seems a pity to me," he remarked, "that I'm not a poor man who wants to make money on horses. They tell you one can't get a chance here; but look at this fellow, worth two hundred if he's worth a penny.—What's that? Oh, bother the position of his head, Car—that's merely a case of hands and bitting."

"I minds, I minds," chanted Cassidy unhappily from the back seat, "having seen that one before. He's like a bad dhrame to me, what ye'd have afther a wake or a weddin'." Here he became lost in thought for a moment; then, silence an impossibility to him, swung round again, his eyes on the railway, as he urged Peter to hurry.

"There was a new company afther takin' up the thrains," he informed them, "that'd sthart to the minnit, no less. Great changes from the old day, whin they'd kape a thrain for half an hour if 'twas necessary. Sure once an' he with Sir James, he towld thim to flag the mail, an' thin clane forgot he mint to go, an' there she was screechin'

for twinty minnits afore he sint me up to say he wasn't goin'. But railways is always queer an' particular. I've an ould uncle that was with thim whin fust they stharted; he spint five year at Marteen, an' thin they moved him. They used to ring bells in thim days, an' with the dinth ov custom Marteen was in his head, so whin a thrain come in, up an' down with him, pealin' and singin' out 'Marteen, Mar—teen.' 'Ballin, you fool,' says the stationmaster, very hurt, to him. 'Ballin, I mane; Ballin, I mane,' sings me uncle, an' thin, as he was convanient to a carriage, 'but sure 'tis all akel to ye as yer stayin' within.' An' would ye belave it, sir, but there was a directhor in the carriage, an' quite angry he was, an' sint what they calls a riprimand in a letther."

Peter smiled, and sprang the pony at the steep hill to Oonagh station. Every one went to Cahirvally on Saturdays, so the little station was crowded. Country people with empty baskets, and high-born dames without. The men Peter travelled with were full of the opening meet, now a bare fortnight away. Peter listened breathlessly, his fancy conjuring up a certain Peter Reidy, coated by Poole, booted by Peel, hatted by Bennett, with a certain grey horse —— between his knees. Peter had known brief days of glory

in the shires; he was imbued with the pleasant certainty of being able to do a little more than hold his own here, across these perfect pastures and green banks. Peter Reidy had many things to learn, and the extreme difficulty of showing Irishmen the way over their own country was one of them. One of his fellow-travellers was Miss Rochfort's cousin, wrapped in much superiority and fur overcoat. He feebly encompassed a snubbing good morning, and eclipsed, with a visible cloud of hauteur, little Carstairs' attempts at conversation. "Got many more horses?" he asked Peter once. "Buying them from James, I suppose? Better for a beginner——"

"Well, not exactly," said Peter, smiling. "That mare you saw didn't quite look like that." Then he thought of his grey and smiled.

"Oh, that brute—the one you fell off?" said Mr. Saunders languidly, and talked to some one else.

When Peter and Carstairs had cloven their way through a wave of friendly brigands who endeavoured to carry them off on sundry cars, and followed them down the station steps with hails of "Cyar, sir. Cyar. Fust cyar, ye lordship," they got into a wide and dirty street, following the crowd which the train had disgorged, and

banged up against the youngest Miss Clancy, who was walking slowly against the stream. Joy beamed in her eyes as she explained at some length how, for no reason at all, she had been walking that way, and then hastily reminded Peter of his forgotten promise concerning tea and the twist round. The length of Peter's list made the "twist" impossible, but he promised with much fervour to meet the damsel for tea, if he ever discovered Miss Muldooney's, and accepted an offer of guidance to the best saddler's.

She led them by devious ways to a seething street, filled with a concourse of carts and country people; the former generally straying alone—the latter, when not engaged in "handling" purchases, counting change in the middle of the road. They slid past a row of butchers' shops bearing grim evidence of man's carnivorous habits; dodged the extra active smell floating from an abode of dead fish, one or two, long strangers to the sea, lying limply on a wooden slab; and were left by Miss Clancy at a small saddler's, where the fresh smell of leather drove cleanly to their nostrils.

Here they encountered an affable youth, who took the list handed to him, and murmured apologetically that "himself was out," and that "'twas a fine day for shoppin', praises be." Peter

peered round the tiny shop, with its stock saddle and blue horsesheet, clearly arranged for show; then he turned, tendering money, and desired that his parcel should meet him later at the evening train for Oonagh. The affable youth licked his pencil, making unsightly smudges on the expensive monogrammed paper. "To be sure," he said cheerfully, "what we have of them."

"What's that?" said Peter, pausing in a confidential remark to Carstairs that there was no place like Ireland.

"All the things I have marked with the pincil," said the youth, "ye'll find below at Martin the grocer's. 'Tis the shop most used by the quality"; he then tendered Peter's change.

Peter swallowed a heated remark concerning loss of time and damned fools, and went out hurriedly, quite forgetting to leave his name. He was better treated at Martin's, and then, being discovered by Harrison in rapt admiration of two damsels who were gazing at some brilliant green silks behind a plate-glass window and yearning to possess some, remarking "that 'twas like sattin that English silk," he was carried off to the club.

The high dingy houses, the muddy streets, the devious ways of the traffic, found a way to Peter's heart. It was his father's birthplace and his

future home, and it gripped him. Then in a pleasant scrum of the odours of many tobaccos and much Irish whiskey, he was regaled with tales of horses and hunting without stint.

There was a hint of patronage to the new comer; the banks swelled mountain high in the smoke haze, the walls to solid towers; the runs, as they were described, would have occupied several days. "Jove!" thought Peter as the tales of great hunts waxed and waned, "this place may be too much for me." But, as he found later that many of these tales tended to extol the virtue of some man's horse which had gone throughout without mistake, when the ditches were packed thick with less perfect animals, and which horse was for sale—at a price—he grew comforted. The new grey was in his mind. They had not found that.

Memory jogging him, he suddenly recalled Miss Clancy, and after a brief inquiry fled to Miss Muldooney's, where a large arrangement of plaster of Paris in the window reminded him of matrimony, and a drift of heated air of tea. Here he found the youngest Miss Clancy, grown pensive from delay, waiting for him in an upstairs room at a large dinner-table. He partook of tea, poured out in a large cup, and observed, with

amazement, Miss Clancy's power of eating sugared cakes with uncertain jammy contents. The damsel was pleasant and confidential, especially as to her parents. She herself apparently possessed aspiration to higher things, and they did not. Memories of the dark crimson liveries oppressed her as she invited Peter to make an early call—not to wait for his mother, but come over cosily; and she trusted he would not despise their way of living. "Papa's that old-fashioned, he'd sicken you," she observed sourly. "'Tisn't the want of money that keeps him either, but he's set on the petticoats. 'Twould worry you, Mr. Reidy, with plenty handy fellows one could train in to wait."

Peter assured her, with much gravity, that many of the great lights of the earth possessed the same strange "set," and he mentioned names with a fluency which set Miss Clancy smiling, just as Carstairs drifted in, and called a coy giggle from the damsel by placing his chair very close to hers. Elated by this giggle, he proceeded to wrestle for the possession of the cake plate, which was contested with sundry little high-pitched squeals, and injunctions to "give over now, Mr. Carstairs," and "have done with your nonsense." It was during this too friendly moment that Miss

Rochfort, her mother, and grandmother came in; the girl looking tired and oppressed by many small bundles, her mother reading from a stout notebook, the old lady apparently innocent of employment and encrusted with jewels. Peter half rose, but his greeting was strangled by Miss Rochfort's faint bow and the fire of her mother's grey eyes as they swept by the party.

"How'd do, Mr. Reidy," said the dowager affably.

Peter coloured, wished Miss Clancy in Jericho, and rose to leave.

"Indeed you'd want to hurry," announced the damsel airily, with a defiant glance at the new comers. "I hear the new company have the trains half mad." She then urged the early call upon Peter in a loud voice and squeezed his hand affectionately, saying she'd "see them down." Miss Rochfort's blue eyes were on the tablecloth as they left, but her mother's thunderous "How can the county . . ." rumbled after them down the stairs.

Oppressed by a murderous feeling of ill-will towards every one in general and Miss Clancy in particular, Peter despatched Carstairs to buy some tobacco, and walked slowly towards the station, drifting into a crowd of half-drunken

country men and laden women making for the same goal. He was early, so stood listening to the hooting trains, the excited babble of the passengers to some other station as they swayed and tacked and wrestled for their day's shopping across a long wooden shelf.

The gate was clanged to, and the train lumbered off; just as it did so a burly bearded giant lurched through the crowd, diffusing a reek of bad whiskey as he came, and made for the closed barrier.

"Ticket," said the official, who was new to Cahirvally and its ways.

"New ways ye have, new ways," rumbled the giant crossly as he produced a greasy leather purse. "Return to Dromin, young man."

"Dromin? Train gone. Next, eight-ten," delivered the official crisply.

"Gone? Gone?" The big man swung on his heel and stared at the clock—it was a little past five. Here were new ways in earnest. "No, let ye hurry on, Mr. Heggarty, she'll be off this minute." But this wooden delivery of trains which started at the exact hour named for them! "The five out!" thundered the man, "an' the hour not done sthrikin'. How is dacent min to git home, I'm afther askin'? Thin I'd have ye to know, young man," he rumbled bitterly to the

bewildered Dublin official, "that the punctuality of ye'r thrains is a great inconvanience to the public," and he lurched out again, to benefit the nearest public-house until eight o'clock.

"Fine things, new companies," soliloquised Peter, strolling on, to be suddenly confronted by the affable saddler's assistant, who breathlessly explained that his presence was necessary because the "gintleman had quite forgotten to give his name." Peter was in excellent time, but Carstairs was not, and the hour for starting was past when the little man bundled breathlessly up the platform, laden with boxes of tobacco. "Cut it jolly fine," he panted, "jolly fine. Went down the wrong platform first."

As Peter pushed him into a carriage he was suddenly struck by the memory of a promise which he had made to Mrs. Reidy concerning several magazines which she particularly wanted; so he got out again and clutched a passing porter.

"Time to go back to the bookstall?" The whole station was worried by its new importance. "Not a minute. Wasn't it on time now?" So Carstairs was put in again, doors were locked, tickets taken, yet they remained stationary. It seemed their fate to encounter the Rochforts; her ladyship, grim and stately, sat next to Peter,

Miss Rochfort at the far end, and the Dowager by her granddaughter. The eight were made up by Doyle, Saunders, and an unknown man.

Peter looked at Miss Rochfort, met a glance from her blue eyes, and tapped the arm of his seat ruefully. "Hang that Clancy girl," he muttered with asperity, and tapped the harder—a process which evidently reduced Lady Rochfort's nerves to jelly, for she glared madly at the beating fingers.

Minutes passed, until Carstairs' wrongs loomed largely on his mind's horizon. He might by this time have purchased every magazine upon the dingy bookstall. After a furious inspection of his watch, he rose and thrust his head through the carriage window. Several officials hurried past as if something was wrong; Carstairs spied and stopped a passing inspector.

"Inspector!" he piped. "Inspector!" Anger edged his shrill voice.

The man stopped unwillingly; other heads, popped out to discover the cause of delay, turned towards Carstairs.

"Inspector!" he said furiously, "I wish to make a complaint. Kindly attend to me. I arrived here ten minutes ago—to be accurate,' he consulted his watch, "eleven and a half." The inmates of the carriage crowded up behind

him to hear the argument; Doyle's red head peering over his shoulder, Peter clinging to his arm, Miss Rochfort just behind. "Ten minutes, eleven minutes ago"—Carstairs' voice, always bearing a resemblance to a siren in its upper note, now rose shrilly—"I asked them if there was time to return to the bookstall for some magazines which I wanted most particularly—for a lady—particu-lar-ly." The official looked dubiously sympathetic. "I was informed by a porter that there was not a second to spare, I was locked in, and we are still here! It is absolutely scandalous, and I wish to know the reason of the delay." This last note rang trumpet-like.

The inspector was one of the old employés; his hand travelled unhappily to his chin, he seemed to hesitate, then with a sudden burst of confidence he leant forward. "The delay?" he said. "The delay?"—the tail of his eye raked the light-flecked, hooting darkness beyond the smoky roof. "Well, to tell ye the honest truth, sir, we've mislaid the ingin of this train—an' praises be to hiven, they have found her an' here she comes . . ."

He fled, happily missing the wild roar of laughter which echoed in his wake, and at that moment the missing engine struck her waiting train with a bumping jar. Carstairs was

still jammed into the window, mouthing comments; not at all sure that some one had been impertinent to him. "But I should have been allowed to fetch my books," he shrilled. "I am firm as to that, I am firm."

If he was, the others were not: as the engine struck them Doyle flopped heavily backwards, and it was not Peter's fault that he lost his balance (having removed his hand from Carstairs' shoulder to laugh loudly), clutched the nearest thing to him, which happened to be Miss Rochfort; swung for a second, and sat down heavily in Lady Rochfort's lap, that lady's daughter in his arms and a sensation of scrunching paper parcels beneath him while Miss Rochfort clawed the empty air and muttered incoherent words.

"Good—good Lord!" observed Peter wildly, clutching the swaying little damsel, and in the blank horror of the situation quite forgetting to get up, until Doyle and Saunders, the latter's eyes baleful, started to the rescue, taking the little lady from his arms; his resting place meanwhile uttering strange and stifled exclamations. The train bumped again as it started, quite impeding Peter's attempt to rise gracefully and apologise.

"I assure you the train—the mislaid engine—the

bump"—stammered Peter incoherently, standing above the crushed lady.

"Sir!" Lady Rochfort rumbled at him, coldly furious; ruffling up several paper bags which had reposed in her capacious lap—the united weights of Peter and her daughter were not small—"Sir, I am—I am surprised at your awkwardness!" She fumbled at a squashed parcel. "You have broken——"

"Not eggs?" clamoured Peter wildly, recalling the crunch and casting fevered looks over his shoulder at his clothes. "Not eggs, surely?"

Lady Rochfort turned a lively purple; it was enough to be sat upon—in public—by the son of an upstart millionaire; but the thought that she, Baroness Rochfort, a magnate of the county, should carry eggs homeward in paper bags, well nigh reduced her to suffocation. She chewed some half-choked words which were nearly related to impertinence, and finished by remarking unwisely and furiously that "she believed Peter had done it on purpose."

"Oh, but I assure you," said Peter, recovering himself, "I assure you, on my honour, that it's the last place I should ever have thought of sitting on. Pray forgive me, and believe that," and he sat down placidly.

Lady Rochfort's mouth quivered with unborn bitter things which it feared to produce, her brow was thunderous; Miss Rochfort sat mute and pink in her corner, and the Dowager broke the awful silence by saying "He! He!" twice with horrid distinctness. To the others it was too serious for mirth.



Lady Rochfort's mouth quivered with unborn bitter things.

Then Carstairs, having assured himself that they had really started, drew in his head, quite unaware of the accidents in the carriage, and as he sat down himself, proceeded to enlarge volubly and shrilly upon Ireland, her ways, and her railways; Peter agreeing with him gravely.

They ran on through the quiet country, a crescent moon riding high in an opal sky. Past stretches of level bogland, the pools shimmers of ink, the coarse grass waving in the evening wind. Past crossings, where some one waved

flags to assure them of well-being, and arrays of carts waited patiently. Little cloudlets, fading from pink to purest amber, floated in the tinted west. The loneliness of Ireland lay across the silent land, biting deep into Peter's heart; he watched it sliding by, green pastures, dimly seen, grazing sheep and cows; rough colts, which some day he might buy, peering up at the passing train.

The Rochforts got out at Cardee, her ladyship leaving with the dignity of an offended war-horse. Peter rose politely; still more politely he contrived in a second's space to collect all her parcels and hand them out to her one by one, with sweet smiles—Doyle and Saunders having fled to the van for different belongings—parcels which were received with an awful silence to him and fevered cries to Timothy O'Hanlon, the one porter, to come to her rescue, especially as one packet, containing shoes, was not to be found. Finally she stalked away, so that Moira, who had waited by, received a last parcel just as the train started. It appeared to be boxes of shoes.

"Good-night," said the girl, smiling over the bulging bundle.

"Good-night," said Peter gravely, his lips twitching as he met her eye.

Then they went on, sliding under Knock Hill,

darkly purple above them in the tender light. To the right lay the woods of Ballydane, running close to the thinned copses of the Rochfort lands. A bar of darkness in the dim distance marked the line of Burrows Hill, its furthest spur running straight into the rose-flushed west.

"I think, Peter," said Carstairs, as they got out at Oonagh and the fidgety pony slid down the steep descent, "I think, next time we go to Cahirvally, we'll motor. These trains are really too trying."

"I'm not so sure of that," said Peter quietly, as they cleared a couple of donkey-carts, brushed aside some bundle-laden old women and took the road at a gallop, the smart groom bumping on the narrow back-seat.

On the following Monday the grey horse passed the vet, the examination only marked by that mild little gentleman remarking that a bull would have a better mouth if he was bitted. When the colt was exercised, Peter found that the downward position of his head was not quite so easy to cure; but he looked on it as a matter of riding, and felt a pleasant glow each time he went to see his new purchase, named Starlight for some undefinable reason which associates grey horses and the little specks which twinkle in a clear night.

## CHAPTER IV

### OF SOME MUTTON AND A CHESTNUT HORSE

MOLLY the dairymaid, looking about with amazement, remarked that "'twas like hivin itself, with the white chaney flure an' the elegant green walls, but as for kapin' it as the likes of such a place should be kep——" She shook a disconsolate head, and fell to mopping the tiled floor.

Mrs. Reidy had fixed ideas of what an ideal dairy should be like, though she had never possessed one, and the cool room with brick floor, whitewashed walls, and rows of tin vessels standing on deal tressels had given place to a harmony in green and white, with milk set in china pans, and the latest things in separators and churns standing in the corners.

Molly, travelling backwards over the tiles, bumped against the separator, and rose wrathfully.

"I'd rather," she remarked, "skhim the cream

from one pan of milk than have a churn full from thim things. 'Tis again nather, batin' out the sthuft that was mint to rise in its own good time. Isn't that so, Misther Flaherty?"

James Flaherty, the old herdsman, nodded emphatic assent. He went with the place, rooted there as the great elms in the lawn—a wrinkled, bent old man who had served the O'Neills for years, had wept at their final downfall, but could not leave his cottage by the west gate, and would soon have died away from his daily rounds. So he had remained, preparing to endure the interlopers, and found endurance changing to liking as Mr. Reidy walked with him from field to field, buying or selling as James directed. In fact, except for a regularly paid wage, things were unchanged for him. But the dairy annoyed him; he had come up to lean against the new pale-green doorpost and grumble fervently. White china seemed no place for cow's milk. He was answering Molly just as Peter and his mother came to see the newly completed toy.

"Faix, no," he said. "I don't howld with thim separathors. But one slhap iver I had at thim, an' that was I passin' the road by Mike Quin's away at Borris; an' happenin' to lose a sthrap in the tacklin', I took a turn in to see

could I borry a bit of sthring from him. He was out in the dairy workin' at a new separathor for the life. Proud of it he was, for he's a warm man and can afford thim soort of things. Well, I in an' axed him, an' says Mike, says he, 'Take a dhraw at the handle, for I rimimbers to a bit of a coord that I seen a lasht week round a sthone of sugar from Donlon's,' says he. So he give me the handle and wint out, an' I "—the old man coughed—"faix, I put me sthringth to it," he said, "not lookin' about me, and whativer part of it cot in the dairygirl's clothes I couldn't tell ye, but in two minnits there wasn't a schreed on her no more than if the rats ate thim off her, an' the separathor in whips about the dairy. She let a screech or two, surely, an' I found the handle sthiff, but not bein' used to it I but worked the hardther. 'Twasn't till she hot me whirlin' that I saw what was wrong. Faix, I tell ye, Mike wasn't the plaized man whin he come out with a bit of the ass's reins, not bein' able to lay his hand to a bit of sthring, and found the girl letting roars so that ye'd hear her in Cork, an' grabbin' such odd bits of her clothes as she'd find. I pardon to yer honour's ladyship," he added hastily, seeing Mrs. Reidy. He then wagged a disapproving old head at the separator, and

shuffled off to visit cows and calves and sigh for bygone days.

Peter's motor was ready in the yard; he was going to see the Clancys, and, as Mrs. Reidy began to go happily about the cream and green dairy, the cook, very red in the face, arrived with a long and apparently important message. It resulted in Mrs. Reidy going out to her son to request him to buy a leg of mutton at the Oonagh butcher's and have it sent out by special messenger, as something had happened to the meat and the servants were dinnerless. "A nice leg, Peter, not too fat," said Mrs. Reidy, prompted by the cook, who was delivering directions in an undertone. Peter's declaration that he knew nothing of mutton or butchers and didn't believe they sold meat at Oonagh was overruled. Cassidy and Harris, the chauffeur, whose expression had now taken a permanent tone of perpetual astonishment, were installed together in the back seat, Cassidy acting as guide, for Peter had not an idea of the way. As the car began to throb hideously the fat cook delivered a warning to the effect that "he'd betther spake Mrs. Hannan civil if 'twas she was there, for she was aisy vexed, an' not too well plaised becaise they got no mate from her."

The morning lowered as they slipped towards Oonagh; a dim expanse of grey lay behind the hills; a chill wind stirred the hedges. The car



"A nice leg, Peter, not too fat," said Mrs. Reidy, prompted by the cook.

licked up the road at a lawless pace, darting at the steep railway bridge, bucking over the top ridge, swooping dizzily down the far side; Cassidy

cheering the way by loud-voiced prophecies of imminent death, interlarded with a desire to quarrel with Harris because he was not afraid. Peter checked his speed as they ran into Oonagh. The wide road was a playground for healthy, towy-headed children who scuttled, screaming joyously, across his path, the smaller ones flopping down, to be picked up and chastised if a stray mother happened to be near.

Cassidy directed Peter to a small shop with some odd pieces of meat hanging outside it, jostling two lamps and a bucket. Big Mrs. Hannan stood at the door, obstructing further view. Peter slowed up and remarked hopelessly that "he'd quite forgotten the message." Carstairs, with unnecessary superiority, offered to deliver it; it appeared that he had often bought meat for his own mother in distant England. The car jerked itself to a standstill, panting hideously, a delicate odour of petrol drifting behind it.

Carstairs bent aside and smiled sweetly.

"Have you got a nice leg, ma'am—not too fat?" he said importantly to the large lady of the shop.

Mrs. Hannan flushed a slow brick colour; she was a bad-tempered woman.

"Get on wid ye'r blaggardin'!" she said fiercely, clutching at her many skirts.

Peter bent to examine the machinery, his face distinctly pink; Carstairs turned a pained face upon the butcher's wife, his shrill voice taking a higher note.




Mrs. Hannan.

"I was told to ask you," he said emphatically, unconscious that he let his glance fall upon an enormous bulge of woollen stocking visible above an unlaced boot.

Mrs. Hannan's black brows met; she was unsoothed by a chuckle behind her, by Peter's

shaking form, and a gathering audience outside. With mighty fury, with blazing cheeks she turned upon Carstairs, thundering forth words concerning "blaggyardin' thim that was old enough to be a little gorsoon's mother," while the astonished Carstairs cowered before the storm, his mouth open, his eyes wide, waiting for an opening to proffer further explanations. Matters were getting strained, the noise of wrath had roused the village, when Cassidy came to the rescue by leaning forward and remarking curtly that "'twas a leg of mutton the gintleman wanted, ye ould gommach!"

"An' why, in the name of thim above, if 'twas mate ye wanted, couldn't ye say so, with ye'r games?" bellowed Mrs. Hannan, rolling her vast self out of sight, the over-hasty exit of her small husband from the shop pointing to a desire to evade the lady's fist. Carstairs was now silent; but Peter, purple-faced, taking up the argument, the mutton's journey to Ballydane was arranged for.

Carstairs resented, with great bitterness, being called a rake as they drove on. He spent some minutes in voluble, over-sensible explanations, and was inclined to be sulky.

Directed by Cassidy, they sped onwards by devious byways until Claheen was reached—a great square house, grey as the wintry skies, for

the clouds had reached them and a cold rain fell sharply. The hall door stood open; a squealing bell echoed through the house, causing an audible scurry of footsteps and a fleeting vision of heads at a window close to them. A servant bolted like a rabbit across the hall, and a swift argument came to them: "I tell you I'm a holy show, and they at the open door. We must be out, Norah." This was followed by Miss Baby's voice declaring that Peter had come to see the horses and they must be in, and a fervent prayer to the unseen Norah to bring a coat quick that she might throw it over her. Norah herself declaiming that to the door she could not go, "be raison of her drhess bein' dhyin' below an' nothin' on her but a petticoat, and one of the young ladies must answer the bell."



Miss Baby Clancy wrapped in a waterproof coat.

Carstairs was looking eagerly at the car when the voices died out, and Miss Baby Clancy, wrapped in a waterproof coat, appeared at the door, smiling sweetly, as she observed that she hoped they were not long there, but no one heard them till chance made her take a turn to the window. The second Miss Clancy, very red in the face, was ensconced behind a table, where she remained for a few minutes, and then skirted out, delivering audible directions in the hall "to lift the ashes in the drawing-room grate, an' to bring her a pair of boots that would hide her stockings; also to let Mr. Tommy know at once."

Miss Baby rose and banged the door, and Peter, embarrassed, apologised for so early a visit, but he said he had come to see the horses, and had engagements for that afternoon and every other day. Baby Clancy, folding the coat over several shortcomings, assured him they were always welcome.

Uprooted by high calls of "Tommy! Masther Tom!" a tall young man, looking like a very old boy or a very young man, appeared sheepishly, wishing they had given him notice, as the horses were away at the farm and not tidied up in any way. He had the yard full of long tails—this he said emphatically, and was confirmed by his sisters. The window-panes were tear-

dimmed and the heavens wept coldly, but the youngest Miss Clancy promptly suggested driving down in the "inside" rather than bring the horses up in the cold. This was adopted. Mr. Tommy disappeared, to reappear driving a leather box on two wheels drawn by the remnants of a grey horse with little save his bones and skin to call his own. After an interlude, while the two girls sped away to change, they packed into this, the grey starting at a pace astonishing to any one who had looked at him.

The way lay along a hilly boreen, and as the old horse took it at a reaching trot, Peter and Carstairs had their first experience of an inside car. When Peter had twice flown on to Miss Clancy's knees and had thrice slid half-way out the door, he ceased apologising, and clung feverishly to the strap near the front. Carstairs, whose riding weight was ten stone, abandoned all hope, his shrill voice echoing as he bumped from spot to spot; Miss Baby Clancy remarking as she took him once again upon her lap, that "these insides were queer till you got used to them, especially when the road was a trifle uneven." It seemed a mild description of the assortment of ruts they had driven over and into.

The farm buildings were in a wide yard, their

approaches guarded by many manure heaps. Carstairs, his inch tape in his hand, was carried away by the Miss Clancys; and Peter, having dodged a sick cow, two calves, and a cross dog, found himself in a dim, roomy loose-box occupied by a well-bred chestnut horse, proving, as the dingy rugs were removed, to be in excellent condition, though, according to Tommy Clancy, "thrown there, with just a sop of hay, when the men were passing." This was the beast, apparently, which could skim mountains and rivers and much more besides.

As Tommy Clancy poured forth the tale of his virtues, the chestnut came out gingerly, shivering in the chilling rain, trotting with a taking action among the manure heaps. Its shoulders were better than its quarters, and there was a certain slackness of girth which would have warned a wiser man; but Peter drank in the long accounts of much neglect, and imagined the horse blooming and thickening under Magee's care. The chestnut used one foreleg a little doubtfully; seeing Peter's eye upon this, Tommy Clancy remarked that he'd given that leg a brush the other day, all smiths bein' the divils. It was no day, he said, to gallop a horse; still, Peter had better see him do a turn, and unearthing a saddle, Tommy presently appeared in the

driving rain, cantering round a squashy field, riding with consummate skill, jumping a double hank and stone gap with a deceptively careless appearance, and scrapped out remarks, flung in passing, that an armchair would be more dangerous.

Peter was satisfied ; a few moments' trial seemed all that it should be ; so he soon went in out of the chilling rain. A necessary inquiry as to soundness was abridged by the expression of genuine pain which it called forth on Tommy Clancy's face. So far as he was concerned, any one might be called in, but he was prepared to guarantee soundness, and—that was enough. So Peter, impressed, bought the horse, at what seemed to him a reasonable price, with its verbal guarantee of soundness, its marvellous character ; its fat sides, fed as it was on the previously mentioned sop of hay, now augmented by an occasional feed of bran. They had no time, it appeared, to cosset horses.

With the air of a man who has done much for a friend, Tommy Clancy led Peter to another dim box containing a great black ; but it moved stiffly, and even the careless explanation concerning the side-car it had kicked to bits a week before could not disguise its hocks. So it was passed by ; and somehow, Peter's qualms about the foreleg

commenced to get unpleasantly active. No side-car could have been accountable for well-developed curbs.

When Peter recalled Carstairs, it was with the idea that his friend had sought shelter and light entertainment with the two Miss Clancys; but he was mistaken. As they left the black horse, they saw him ploughing to meet them, his face alight with excitement.

"I've got a horse!" he blared. "I've bought one from Miss Clancy. I tell you, Peter, it answers, or a little over, to every measurement.' His inch tape trailed along the manure—his manner was triumphant,

"Bring him out!" directed Carstairs into a shed. "Bring him out."

"Dhrive on, let ye," said some one, and with a solid trampling of hoofs there came from the low-roofed cowhouses the largest horse that Peter had ever seen. Its lumpy head drooped dejectedly, a lately docked tail was buttoned into mighty quarters; you followed the line of powerful limbs down to huge fringed hoofs; great round shoulders dovetailed into a short neck. A further look revealed fired hocks and puffy joints Carstairs, inch tape in hand, hovered round proudly, telling them that every measurement of

bone was correct, or a little over. The latter statement seemed unduly probable.

Miss Clancy, looking faintly cunning, then peered into the rain. "One could go anywhere on that one," she observed. "It's a real bargain."

Peter thought it possible, especially, he said unkindly, "if you wanted a heavy load brought also." Then, oblivious of the rain, he walked round the mighty horse; a hurried babble of his prowess still proceeding from the cowshed. Then Peter inquired if the step-ladder to mount with had been thrown in; and Carstairs, visibly offended, ordered his horse to be replaced. He was full of the pride which new ownership produces; and more than touchy as to his choice.



Carstairs and The Behemoth.

Peter was silent as the "inside" played ball with their unwilling persons on the homeward

drive; the old grey setting a wondrous raking pace, his long strides lifting wheels from rut to rut with a precision which almost appeared premeditated. A lunch of hot chops and roast chickens, the latter rather tough, awaited them, together with excellent champagne, produced as quite an everyday matter, topped by old port and liqueur brandy: the Clancys never failed in their cellar. All doubts were at rest, doubtful tendons a passing dream, when the car came round. Throughout lunch young Clancy chanted praises of his horse, and by the time they left, Peter was almost inclined to thank him for the bargain he had been allowed to secure, and to imagine that even the mighty horse might be better than his looks.

But the whip of thin cold rain in their faces effaced the rosy light caused by old port and brandy. The world looked grey again; the sky moving sullenly, rain drifting against them. Then, just as Peter recalled the chestnut's tendon, and the cheque he had torn off, Cassidy leant forward and spoke.

"I hopes ye bought nothin'," he remarked confidentially.

"Why?" said Peter, shaving an awkward corner.

Here Cassidy plunged into hurried sentences, first entreating Peter to "kape the machine aisy a minnit, for whin she spheeded she'd dhrown the v'ice of a crow. The man there," he proceeded to say, was "as close as a morthared wall, no less, but be the grace of God he had a fri'nd in the garding boy, he bein' undher an obligation to the family; Cassidy's father having at one time lent the boy's mother one pound. An' "—Cassidy peered at the uninterested chauffeur—" he swhore me not to tell, but I wanted to be warnin' ye, in case they'd be thryin' to make ye buy, for they sould all they had good but yesterday, an' there's nothin' but a chestnut horse left, that they're sick from bilin' the leg off all lasht year. But once or twice he'd come out, an' ye couldn't fatten him—faix their boots is wore out travellin' down wid mashes of turnips four times a day, an' linseed cake an' all. Arah! for God's sake, misther Pether, hould—we'll be in Malone's house, an' the man may be at home," for Peter, duly irritated, suddenly swooped down a hill, and was not at all sure that a rush through a breed of Malones might not allay his temper. He then pulled a lever sourly, and leant back close to Cassidy's red face.

'But surely, he's a sort of gentleman! He

wouldn't tell a lie, wouldn't cheat deliberately?' he said.

"God save ye," said Cassidy, with fine irony.

"But—but——" said Peter.

"Look here, ye'r honour. Kape her aisy," said Mr. Cassidy. "There's hardly a man in the county but owes that one a turn an' hasn't had dart from thim same. Didn't he sell Sir Jame the finest mare iver ye saw, loose an' breedy lookin', an' be dam"—Cassidy forgot caste in his heat—"be dam, wid me own two eyes didn't I see her to lep at Claheen, over ivery obstacle ye could lay a name to as nate as kiss hands, an' as free as coortin'. An' sure, whin we got her home an' the masther wint off on her, divil a lep she'd throw at all but kickin'. Begonnes, ashplants were scarce an' we havin' her three days, but 'twas all akel to her. Faix if we bate her, she bate us all, sour an' sthubborn as a christian. She's drawin' the plough now, the price of her likes. There but Tommy Clancy himself knows how he had the fear druv into her. He'd sphare nothin'; if he clapped a bit in the divil's own mouth an' threw his leg over him, faix he'd force him a hunt across holy wather. I tell ye 'twasn't wholesome to see the masther's eyes for a time whin ye'd mintion the Clancys. An' there's

the grey he sowld to misther Doyle to dhrive to harness, Mr. Doyle wantin' somethin quite for a sisther he had there. Quite he was, indade, for whin he'd sicken of the road down he'd lie, an' ye should light a match to him before he'd rise. Sure! sure! I niver thought, an' ye havin' no one sinsible wid ye"—here Peter tooted a car out of his way with unnecessary vigour—"that ye were afther horses, but that 'twas the young ladies ye were goin' to have a word with, like all the young officers, or indade I'd tell ye before we got there. God save ye if ye bought a horse!"

"Oh, go to the devil!" said Peter sharply; and Cassidy, withdrawing his head, fell to arguing with Harris.

But the drive was not to end without adventure. A mile or so further on, Peter espied a fine-looking colt grazing by the road, and immediately plunged forth to look at it, followed, of course, by Cassidy; who knew whom the colt belonged to and how it was bred and a good many further matters probably unknown to the owner. The road bent round the field, so Peter directed Harris to wait for them at the turn. The chauffeur went on slowly, but just as they reached the turn, he was checked by one Patsy Harty driving home from Oonagh, fresh from a political

discussion—and very drunk indeed. And the little devils which abide in whiskey chose to point out the car to him as a Saxon aggressor trampling over the holders of the lands. On this idea coming hot to his fuddled brain he proceeded to pull his jennet across the road and leer hideously at the hooting car ; flinging certain confused insults as he did so. Carstairs rose in his seat furiously, commanding in a mighty voice that the road should be cleared on the instant. Mr. Harty replied, thick voiced, that "the divil might shweep thim an' their horseless cyars, but he'd be too much for thim this time." The chauffeur was a peaceful man, and in no hurry; he merely scanned the landscape for Peter and Cassidy : but not so little Carstairs—he was smarting from his treatment by the Irish race, by the lady who had misconstrued his polite request for mutton, by the idea that he had probably wasted his money on the mighty horse ; so he arose, poured forth a flood of crisp Saxon and prepared to get down to turn the patient jennet aside. But Patsy Harty was still sober enough to move and take the offensive. He lurched forth from his cart, daring Carstairs to touch his "jinnit," with a further promise of making "mash" of him if he did so. Mr. Patsy Harty was a large man as he stood in the middle

of the road, breathing drunken threats ; Carstairs was a very small man, but he never dreamt of funking; his voice shrilling viciously, he was plunging to the hopeless encounter, when the chauffeur showed that if not a man of war he at least possessed latent strategic talent: just as a meeting seemed imminent and the large drunken Irishman was preparing to swallow the little bleating Englishman in a furious embrace, Harris backed the car, partly turned it, and coming slowly but irresistibly caught Mr. Patsy Harty behind and swept him, roaring, from the road towards a narrow ditch full of water with a high bank beyond it. The bewildered man lurched across the ditch and shinned with surprising activity up the further height, where, having recovered his breath, he turned, to see his "jinnit" being wheeled aside by his little enemy and his opponents triumphing. But he feared the car; sitting down upon the field he blared defiance down at the road, abjuring Carstairs, whom he designated as a fleabite of a craythur, to but come up upon the level ground and he'd fling back the pieces to go home upon the divil's cyar that was near to kill a dacent man.

In equally loud tones Carstairs blared defiance from the road, only restrained by Harris' entreaties

from climbing the bank to do unequal battle, and matters were at this point when Peter and Cassidy returned. Having taken the situation in, Cassidy advanced upon Mr. Harty and in a few magic words all was peace. The drunken man rolled out upon the road, his attitude one of pure friendship to every one, declaiming as he came that any friend of Jamsey Cassidy's was a friend of his—here Carstairs groaned with rage—and advancing a large hand to shake his late enemy's with. Moreover, overcome by the unwonted excitement, he produced a bottle of whiskey from his pocket, and finished it at a gulp; then after a happy moment, during which he proffered the empty bottle to all his friends, he lost himself in hazy murmurs "of divil's cyars, dam English, but all frinds," and, sitting down, went fast asleep. After he had been with great difficulty put upon his cart, Cassidy tied the reins to the shaft and sent the jennet on its way, observing that "if they left him there until he'd wake, he might not only take a cold on himself, but Hanny Dillon his wife might be gettin' a bit anxious by to-morry."

Then they proceeded, taking the road from Oonagh to Ballydane at a pace which made the world a misty blur, and which caused Cassidy

to remark as they descended "that thim paces should be left to railway thrains; begob if they had sthruck a sthone no less, they'd be flyin' sthill." He then plunged into the front seat, and ere he could be stopped drove the car successfully round to the yard, pursued by Harris on foot, and explaining afterwards that he "had his eye to thim handles all the journey and was as good a coachman as any little Englishman." The remainder of the argument was thrashed out in the kitchen.

Peter went in out of the rain, slowly thinking of his horse; he did not quite believe Cassidy, and he applied the balm of "gentleman" and "impossible" to his wounded spirit that night.

But the balms proved valueless when the horses arrived next day. Magee the groom merely ran his finger down the leg, then he looked at Peter, and words seemed unnecessary, "Did ye buy him to work or to look at?" he asked coldly.

Peter muttered something about being "guaranteed sound, and a good character." Magee was merely silent.

Then the groom turned to the great horse, which seemed also to leave him wordless; at last, with some respect, having taken three journeys about it, he touched its feet, and inquired if it had a name.

"It has—The Behemoth," said Peter with quick asperity.

Carstairs said that he had not heard it, and Peter said that Miss Clancy had reserved it, but it was a fact. Then Magee recovered himself and affably suggested Mr. Carstairs building a house above, on the baste's back.

"Why?" said the little man, peering wrathfully at the head groom beneath The Behemoth's tummy.

"Becaise," said Magee, "once ye get up ye'll never get down," and Carstairs snorted indignantly.

Peter still hovered about his chestnut; he impressed hopes concerning the foreleg, he repeated that "Mr. Clancy"—there is a certain class of man who is always called Mr. by those whom he considers his compeers—that Mr. Clancy had said—had guaranteed——

"There's some," said Magee, leading the chestnut away, "that says more than their prayers, an' there's foolish childher that listens to thim." He disappeared into a box.

Two days afterwards, Peter began to see the truth of Cassidy's warnings, for a short school brought heat and swelling into the doubtful leg. He said little, but deep in his bruised heart he registered a vow to be even with Mr. Tommy Clancy, and, later—he kept it.

## CHAPTER V

### OF THE FIRST DAY OF THE SEASON

"YE'R hot wather, sir," said Cassidy cheerfully. Peter Reidy, since his arrival in Ireland, had been so struck by the footman's varied accomplishments that he had adopted him as his personal attendant, and it was only during spasmodic moments of uneasy grandeur that Cassidy returned to dull crimson livery and a floured head. "An' the finest huntin' day iver ye clapped an eyeto," he added, as he swung back the old-fashioned shutters and let in the light of day. "The sun shinin' an' a risin' wind an' all." Here he laid out a gorgeous collection of new hunting garments, and left.

Peter drank some hot tea, happily. He was to pass his life at Cahirvally; this day heralded the commencement of his greatest joy. The opening day of the season; everything good before us; all last year's bad starts, bad horses and bad falls forgotten.

This year every fox must run straight; there were to be no fatal moments of indecision as to the line which had so often ended in finding oneself on the outside of a circle, galloping hard to catch the turning pack; no jostling at the first gate, but straight over that fence which looked unjumpable then; no horse which will describe a neat somersault just as you have got on terms, and are galloping almost alone with the now flying hounds, running mute on a breast-high scent, with the best line in the county in front of you. This is to be a peerless winter, for hope is a fox-hunter's god; days of fairy sport such as man has never known, and might find monotonous in its perfection if it were given to him.

Peter had hunted too little to dream of all this; a few days over a fairly easy fly country had been his principal experience; but he beamed over his teacup, and hoped for even greater things. His heart was full of the way he meant to go—he knew no fear—of establishing a reputation swiftly among these men of Cahirvally, who rumour whispered were bad to beat. And he was to do it on horses of his own choosing and making: his two for to-day were Starlight, the big grey colt with the ugly head, and the weedy brown mare which was still designated by Magee, the head

groom, as a "chape hunther." All his buying was not quite so happy: there was the Clancy chestnut with the very uncertain leg, and there were several others, sold as favours by local magnates, which did not appear to be the bargains he had aspired to, even with their wonderful characters.

It was, however, the grey to-day; no one could tell him in patronising tones that he couldn't go wrong on that horse of Doyle's or that mare of Martin's. Peter chanted the Meynell Hunt, vastly out of tune, as he splashed in his bath; he sliced his chin to the tune of a "Fair Hunting Day," which he had started unwisely as he commenced to shave; staunched the wound, grumpily, with cotton-wool to a dirge-like verse concerning "the doctor in boots," and had exhausted all gay hunting songs and was hard at "The place where the old horse died" as he brushed his close-cropped hair. Then he peered at himself in his new pink coat, reefed the latest things in ties a little tighter, and turned away with a strong idea that Peter Reidy was extremely good to look at. This dream was mixed with visions of the big grey, flinging the banks behind him, showing the way over some mighty wall as they forged ahead in a fast gallop, clearing a wide river, bucking a gate. . . .

"Misther Magee wants to know, sir, what bit will he be afther puttin' on the grey horse?" said a voice at the door. "He says ye won't sthop short of Cork if ye kapes to the snaffle ye orthered."

"Tell him to put a curb on," said Peter testily. "The snaffle was for the mare. A good big bit, so as to make him keep his head up."

"Misther Magee says the divil an' all wouldn't do that—Yes, sir," said Cassidy, vanishing hastily as he caught Peter's eye.

Peter continued his dreams. He might even pick Lady Rochfort out of some damp ditch and thereby bridge the gulf between them—a bridge which Peter gazed at with sorrow, and an ever-present memory of twinkling blue eyes.

"There are men both good and true who hold," warbled Peter loudly, to the tune of the Meynell Hunt, which he thought he was singing as he banged open Carstairs' door. That pallid little person was also admiring himself, but he blushed and turned hastily when Peter entered. The mighty steed, The Behemoth, which he had bought from Miss Clancy had gone on to the meet; practically untried by its new owner, who had been content to abide by the lady's word as to its capabilities. So far, it was his only purchase.

Downstairs they met Mr. Reidy, also in pink, and visibly nervous. To jog a horse about a park for your health's sake, and to pursue a hunted fox across hill and dale, were very different things. However, Mr. Reidy suppressed his nervousness, reflecting that there were always roads to ride on, and they started. Peter, who was too excited to eat, having by this time returned to the words of Meynell Hunt, and got on to the tune of the Old Horse—but no one noticed him.

It was a purple day, such as Ireland alone can paint: purple skies, fading to tinted grey and silver; purple hills, dim in the distance, dark on the summits, faintly green on their swelling sides. The wild land stretched away to the horizon as they sped past; here and there a glimpse of sunshine turned some field into a patch of silver. Field upon field, fair to see and to ride over, tones of purple and vivid green clashing and toning, until the laden clouds began to climb the sky and the whip of the westerly wind to whisper of coming rain.

"Doesn't it grip the heart in you, Peter?" said Mr. Reidy softly, his eyes fastened on the old land he loved. "I've lived in England for forty years, and it was a good home to me, but my heart was always here. The very wind has a different

whisper in it, and you never saw a field there like that. See there—" he pointed to the distance beyond Knock Hill's aggressive peak, shooting up alone from a surrounding bog. "I was born beyond there, where you can see the line of the big hill rise, and we'll go down one day soon, to see where the old people lie. I remember too, getting holiday once when I was fifteen, and running out here to see the covert drawn. Little I thought then I'd ever ride with the rest for them. For you, Peter, you've got your youth, for me, I'm commencing at the tail end," he sighed quietly. "But—the old land's the same to me," he put his hands out as if he wished to take the country, with its fair landscape, its lawless tender people, to his heart, and hold them there.

The motor whizzed along narrow roads, disturbing grazing donkeys and agitated goats, linked in unwilling company; until it turned into a wide iron gate, and pulled up on a lawn. Fresh horses plunged and whinnied; butterflies cast the chrysalis of top-coats and emerged, pinkly fine, to search for waiting steeds. Dingy men in caps rode by on unclipped youngsters; whose heels it was well to avoid; smart habits and strange habits, the latter generally bright blue, settled themselves in various saddles.

The Rochfort carriage, drawn by the roaring yellow horse, now lumbered in, holding Miss Rochfort and her mother. Lady Rochfort soon eclipsed her saddle on a big useful horse, fired for curbs and with a tube in its throat, but up to much weight; while Miss Rochfort, clad in a shabby skirt and an old covert coat, proceeded to dive actively on to the back of a plunging awkward four-year-old, and having achieved this end, sent him off for a steadying gallop. The supercilious cousin, Saunders, mounted a fine black, and held forth, loud-voiced, to an admiring circle of friends. He was at all times a great man before they found. Starlight, the grey, was a picture now, docked, with a bloom on his dappled coat, and muscle on his deep shoulders and powerful thighs; Peter settled his stirrups happily, his joy undimmed by Magee's voluble advice to "kape a hoult of that horse's head or there'd be a mischief done to some one." Carstairs took a perch on The Behemoth's middle, his legs sticking out like booted compasses; Mr. Reidy climbed uneasily on to a magnificent cob, and the party from Ballydane moved off into the chattering crowd; hounds were just going on.

The grey jogged, leaning on his bit heavily, perfection if his head had been in the right place.

Donovan O'Grady checked his horse to look. "Good-looking," he snarled. "By Jove! good-looking. You paid a price for him."

"I—no. I picked him up here quite cheap," said Peter, endeavouring to keep his voice free of pride, as he jobbed at an irresponsive mouth. He wanted them to see that apart from his money he could find horses and ride them.

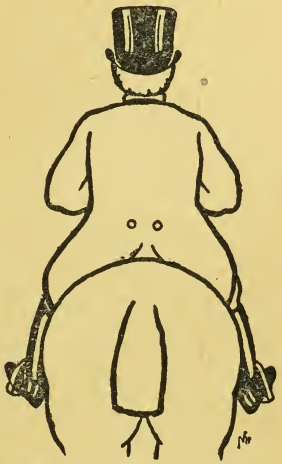
"Here?" O'Grady's snarl deepened. "Here? Ah!"—intelligence suddenly lit his lean face. "Well! I know him now. I tell you, that kind of thing beats me. Why can't a chap like you buy trained ones? It's only a matter of price. I sold you one good horse, and I offered you another, and they'd have carried you."

"Why, bless me, won't this horse carry me?" broke in Peter, with asperity.

"Oh, by Jove, he'll do that," said O'Grady emphatically. "Carry you? He'll carry you anywhere, be sure of that." Here he reined back. "Jealousy," muttered Peter to himself, but with an uneasy twinge below the idea. "Wouldn't pay enough, I suppose, and missed this beauty." Here he patted the steep slope of the grey's neck, and tried to get the Roman nose into place. He came up to Miss Rochfort, but she was too busy for conversation, her hands full with her young

horse. "Take care," she said anxiously. "I'm afraid of my heels."

Peter drew back; he eyed his father's stout back, jogging happily in front, as for one disloyal moment he wished that Michael Reidy had been born in other spheres. They climbed up to the first covert, a patch of thick gorse on the side of a conical hill. The grey shooting with more vigour than skill across a low stone wall, and hustling like a catapult down the steep slope beyond, his progress had the effect of turning Arvagh, Miss Rochfort's mount, into a whirl of heels and head, with a small figure clamped somewhere in the middle. Far below lay Cahirvally town, its spires silvery in the glow; the hills beyond flecked by the shadow of the drifting clouds.



Mr. Reidy's "stout back."

The field grouped, waiting anxiously; it was a certain find. Doyle hustled fussily through the crowd, keeping a watchful eye on other men and his own start; O'Grady, by himself, sat quiet, his

eye on the gorse—he was a man who seldom hurried and was always there. Then came a long-drawn whimper . . . another . . . horses stirred, ears forward; men sat straighter, tightening bridles: people spoke of the probable line, faint hearts hoping for a scurry to Ballyhale; eager ones watching the road below, with the big bank country beyond. The whimper deepened into a chorus, passing and repassing them in the small gorse.

Then, "He's away!" signalled from the lower end—a thundering charge of horses to the gateway, long ere there was time to get out of covert. Peter felt the reins almost wrenched from his grasp, Starlight tearing on, until his career was checked by bumping into a mass of horses jumbled into the narrow gateway, their paths barred by an enraged field master who had pulled his across the way. Hounds dashed out of covert, settling to the line; the field master fled with a clear lead, and the checked flood poured out, hustling and voluble. The pack were tearing down the hillside, and, judging by the yells which drifted across, the fox was making his way up the steep hill beyond the road. There were two ways to get down—one direct, embellished by a crop of jutting-out rocks, and so

steep that horses slid on their tails; the other to the left, across a low bank, and down a more gradual slope. Fortunately for himself Peter chose the longer way, for, as he charged the bank, he felt very much as if the grey had turned into a four-legged motor, with the brake out of order. His great Roman nose to the earth, Starlight thundered downwards, slid through a broken fence, and dashed at the wall fencing the road. Here Peter saw a fleeting vision of sound macadam, touched once, and another of an awkward stick of timber, vanishing, badly rapped, beneath him. This was mixed up with a third fleeting view of other horses, scuttling from his onslaught, and a faint peppering of comments, not precisely complimentary, echoing as he fled.

They tore across a low-lying field, a line of thorns and a sloping bank marking a mighty ditch; this was taken at the same breakneck speed, with a staggering lurch as the grey, nose down, suddenly saw it. "Oh, there's no doubt as to nothing stopping him," gasped Peter, as Starlight swung on his leader's tracks, and breasted, with unchecked ardour, the hill beyond the fence. Hounds were slipping out of sight over a high green bank, flanking a whitewashed chapel and a churchyard. The men in front turned to the

left; the grey, not Peter, turned after them over a thorny fence, half hedge, half wall, at which Starlight checked, and then took with a bucking lurch which set Peter's perfectly clad legs flapping widely, to find rest on his horse's neck. Also he thought he heard a chuckle somewhere behind him.

Pink coats in front began to drop out of sight into a narrow lane, pausing cautiously as they slid down, but here fortunately, though he tore up to it, Starlight steadied himself, and just as Peter, his lips set grimly for the crash, was wondering whether his grave would be the well of a passing car, or the inside of an approaching governess cart, the grey propped, spun round, again laying Peter on his mane, sliding down the now broken bank with the steadiness of a trained hunter. Allowing Peter to collect his lost breath, and examine the remnants of his gloves. Common sense urged him to go back and find the brown mare Judy, out for second horse, but instead of wisely doing this he commenced to coin excuses for his mount. Over fresh, a start downhill—it might and must be only that; so he rode on with the crowd, dubiously.

Hounds had checked among the tombstones,

and were spread out, noses to earth, over the humping graves. "'Twas a place for a sphortin' man to lie," observed a capped countryman by Peter's side. "With the fox crossin' in near ivery run from Doleen."

"See him across?" thundered the Master, peering down from the high fence above the graves.

A man with a spade hustled round from behind the chapel, waving the weapon of his gruesome toil, and indicating the line. "He wint over me very head," he cried, "an' I diggin' Timsy Phelan's grave to be ready to-morry. Cleared it out, an' I seen him away goin' esht by Martin Hanlon's slhate house."

There was hurry and scurry then, hounds dashing to a short note on the horn. Peter could not go back, he escaped from the crowd by jumping the high bank out of the lane, the grey slipping up without an effort; he was a magnificent fencer when he took time over it—and they were away again, hounds driving steadily down a long slope, a line of perfect banks in front. Then with appalling bitterness it was borne in upon Peter, that his grey horse was the worst of pullers. Down went his great head; he strode on blindly, saving falls with a goat's activity,

thundering at each fence at full speed. A big drop lay at the end of the fourth field, Peter lying back and sawing vainly as they flew into unknown space at the last possible moment, and appeared to touch ground some two fields further on. By this time Peter was hardened to the comment he excited. They tore along, Peter making for an open cattle gap, only too anxious by now to avoid a fence. Coming for the same gap from the other side was the Master, galloping furiously, his eye on his hounds, which had turned away from him, and, bumping hotly in his wake, her reins loose, came Lady Rochfort.

Now, all men must give place to the Master. His view of the velvet-capped head put new strength into Peter's hands; he hauled with such good effect, that Sir James had passed through just as the grey thudded at full speed into the muddy track. Not so Lady Rochfort; had she looked, she might have seen that the grey horse was out of hand, that Peter was leaning back wrenching at his bridle. But her ladyship was not given to observation; she saw a pink coat, thought it must give place to her, and she was in hurry, for hounds were swinging away up the hill they had come down.

"Look out!" yelled Peter, suddenly seeing the lady—so far his eyes had been for the Master. Too late!—there was a crashing impact as the galloping horses met in the deep mud, a succession of lurching staggers, vain efforts for recovery, then both horses rolled over on to their sides in the thickest of the ooze. Lady Rochfort quitted




Lady Rochfort in the cow-track.

her saddle rapidly, plumping into a sitting posture with a violence which sent a shower of mud and water heavenwards all around her, hailing her decisive descent.

Peter took it face downwards, sliding across several feet before his progress was arrested by the jerk of the reins he had held on to. Then he got to his knees, spluttering, on a little

island of harder mud, the brown ooze pouring from his new coat, his yellow waistcoat, and his chin.

"Sir! Mr. Reidy!" said Lady Rochfort in awful tones from her yielding seat. She did not attempt to move; it was doubtful if she could have done so, for beneath the slimy upper surface the mud was thick and holding. Her horse stood still, and shook himself thoughtfully, poking at the glazy brown pools with his nose.

"For heaven's sake get up, or you'll go right down, you're so heavy!" said Peter, hastily and unwisely, ploughing his way to the rescue.

He was waved aside with furious dignity. With bitter directness the lady informed him that she would accept no assistance.

"Call some one," she commanded, becoming conscious that she was stuck fast.

Peter expostulated, urged his innocence, vainly; he was cowed by the power of the round grey eyes, and as he wallowed and waited the lady sank. Now the hunt had swept to the left, and then doubled back right above them, so that they were alone—or almost so, for as Peter, bewildered, wiped a few pounds of mud from his waistcoat, he became aware of two horrified blue eyes staring at him through the hedge, and knew that the lady's daughter was looking on.

"For heaven's sake, let me help you up!" he urged, staggering knee-deep in liquid mud.

"I should be obliged," said Lady Rochfort, with hideous emphasis, "if you would call some—gentleman—whom I could trust to assist me."

Peter gave vent to unhappy murmurs. But help was near; just as Miss Rochfort, keeping out of sight, was sneaking off to call somebody, it came—"Glory be to the hivins this night; look at the ould lady in the mud an' she sthuck," declaimed an interested voice, two countrymen springing to the rescue. With a sympathetic chorus of "my, my's!" they splashed through the oozy mud, willing hands outstretched. At the same moment Peter saw a couple of men riding down, and, looking upwards, observed with horror that hounds had checked just above them, making the situation visible to all.

"An' what, in the name of God, ma'am, brought ye roostin' in the cow-track?" demanded one man, as with the "ploop" of an overtight cork Lady Rochfort came to her feet, and staggered in the yielding slime. "Ye'r that weighty ye might have sunk entirely, as one of me own pigs did but lasht year, an' we to find him wid barely the snhout up, the crayture—'twas well ye weren't the same. 'Tis the boggiest

passage ye could find. Did the horses sthumble on ye, ma'am?" they inquired, as they helped the lady to dry land.

"They did," rumbled Lady Rochfort. "They did. Never in all my long years have I been so treated. I was knocked down—deliberately." Her eye sought the miserable Peter.

Here the elder man directed Paddy to run up to the house for an old hoop, till they'd knock a taste of the loose mud off, further remarking that "if the young gintelman wasn't able to resthrain his horse—faix they saw it lammin' down the hill like an ingine—why didn't the lady take a pull, for faix her ould horse looked as if 'twas sthick he was looking for?"

Ere they had driven the mud-soaked lady mad, further rescuers appeared, breathing comfort with suspiciously grave faces; bending to the storm of angry words, and occasionally turning away to repress their laughter. Finally the lady was remounted; Peter, feeling they deserved it, dispensed much silver to his first helpers, and rode sadly up the hill, where the fox had found refuge in a rabbit burrow.

His brow was clouded as he made for the road they had left; covered with mud, probably

branded as the vilest of riders, his morning's dreams were ending bitterly.

Having watched her muddied mother out of sight, Miss Rochfort, ready to comfort, came in his wake ; she had seen the accident. They were going back to Doleen, where there was a whisper of another fox, and as he rode across a level field, Peter saw a crowd round a fence, and heard high-pitched notes, which could only proceed from Carstairs, cutting the soft air. It was a very ordinary drain, neither over-wide or over-deep, but The Behemoth reclined in it, his mighty head laid on the bank, his ponderous limbs in the water. He seemed perfectly happy there, merely flicking his abridged tail, as Carstairs, hopping wildly, struck him feeble blows and urged him to rise. Miss Clancy, on a well-bred roan, thundered direction from the far bank, and the country people, vultures who scent a fall, gathered round.

"He was a good horse," urged Miss Clancy, "if you stuck the spur to him. I don't understand what brought him down," but she protested uneasily.

"Oh, he seems an excellent horse," trumpeted Carstairs politely, striking the great hip with fervour. "Except as regards jumping. Otherwise he went quite well."

"That seems a drawback," observed Miss Rochfort thoughtfully, as she came up. "For a hunter."

"Light a match under the schamer's tail an' he'll lep smhart enough," said an advising voice. "Or here, Mikey, have ye a pin handy? 'Tis heartin' the devil wants, lying there quite an' cool for himself."

"He just appeared to go in," explained Carstairs to the gloomy Peter. "Perhaps he meant to walk through. He walked *over* everything else."

Peter shortened his whip, got down, and delivered a blow which made the mighty horse grunt. "Beat him up," he said grimly.

Ere a man could wink, a dozen sticks appeared from nowhere, a dozen pairs of overwilling hands hailed blows on the recumbent hunter, the owners hopping from bank to bank with feverish activity, seeking a fresh place to strike. "Take that, ye villain ye! Good begob! did ye hear the grunt I rose from him? Well struck, Patsy Delaney! Now he's wakin'!" and one who had no stick kicked with a deadly precision at one spot.

"Success agin!" they roared, as with an awful heave The Behemoth stood up, shooting two of his tormentors into the ditch. From this damp spot they smote the harder, until the horse

struggled up on to the bank and fell to grazing, Miss Clancy murmuring feverishly meanwhile that he really was a good horse but . . .

Peter was past politeness, and suggested sharply that The Behemoth was scarcely his idea of a hunter. "Take him home, Car," he said with bitterness, "and we'll drive a tandem—this fellow leader and yours wheeler."

Carstairs, unaware of any subtle joke, assured Peter that he had no wish to drive any tandem. Then still protesting shrilly, he distributed shillings, and was flung into his dripping saddle, retreating to assure Miss Clancy that he did not consider the horse to have been in fault.

"Oh, we've made a good beginning," said Peter, greatly depressed.

"And—and—mother will never forgive you—but it wasn't your fault," said Miss Rochfort. "I saw it all; I wanted to tell you I saw—the thump, the . . . When you lay down—and mother sat down—that is . . ." Here Miss Rochfort suddenly gave in and abandoned herself to shameful, unnatural laughter.

Peter's face cleared. "No one could be more sorry than I was," he said, allowing himself to chuckle. "But the horse was too much for me."

"The biggest puller in the country, boy," said

O'Grady's voice. "It wasn't your fault. Why didn't you ask some of us? You might have known that there was something wrong when a man had a good-looking horse like that for so long. Jove, man, you're a godsend to rogues."

"Thank you," said Peter meekly, recognising the kindness behind the snarling voice.

"I saw it from the hill." O'Grady caught Miss Rochfort's eyes, and she burst forth again hysterically. "Look here," he added; "one of the Caseys is on a scorcher to-day. Buy that. He'll charge you too much, but you can afford to pay, and he won't land you in a cow-gap." Here he croaked hilariously.

"May I inquire the joke?" said Saunders' supercilious voice.

"We were laughing—at an accident," said O'Grady readily. "Something that I was saying" —for Moira Rochfort's face grew suddenly distressed, and the conversation died.

Mr. Reidy, clean as to coat, beaming as to face, having scrambled across several fences and never seen a hound since, now appeared, the one undimmed member of the Ballydane party.

Peter then gave the grey to the groom and mounted his mare, her light mouth a dream of perfection to his jaded hands. But the day

waned to a disappointing close. Doleen was tried again, vainly, and Ballyhale, a straggling stretch of woodland and rabbit-holed grass, seemed a place to spend a day in. They chased cubs about the laurels until horses lathered and men's patience wore thin. The violet tints of the morning faded, big clouds crawled across the silvery sky; showers fell chilly, driving on a rising wind. Once they left the woods, scurrying out across a line of banks, and here Peter found the younger Casey at his side, riding the horse which O'Grady had recommended; it was a good-looking brown, a perfect fencer, and with powerful well-bred action. With no further taste for bargains, Peter bought the animal at a price in which economy had no voice.

"An' 'twas the mercy of providence itself that ye met small finces an' had to roll over in the soft ground before a worse harm came to ye," remarked Casey severely. "That grey horse is a fair divil to hold. I'd have bought him meself lasht year if the bit was med that'd shtop him—but twasn't. Many's the bad fall he gave his owner with the way he'd charge into his finces blind like, an' be rollin' for a week outside.—They're back in," he added regretfully as the harassed cub turned for shelter, "and begonnes, I thinks they

have him cot this time. Maybe we might get a move off now before 'tis dark."

The cub was undoubtedly "cot," and eaten, but though a move was made to a covert in the open, no luck awaited them. The wind whipped drearily through the gorse, hounds worked listlessly, there was no one at home. Dusk fell, making another bid for sport impossible, and home was the order. It was a long jog back to Ballydane, but Harrison rode with them, his big voice banishing dreariness, chattering of the coming winter and of the sport which was sure to come. Every piece of country passed seemed full of happy memories to him: here he had jumped and fallen heavily; there again was the line of a wondrous hunt, ending far beyond Oonagh; here a wall which he had taken the coping stones off because they were too high to clear; there again, a dim little blot in the fields—Freeland Gorse—a sure find, surrounded by a perfect country.

Peter responded without enthusiasm; he had thought so much of his first day, and had smothered its joys in the oozy mire of a cow-track. Just ahead bumped Lady Rochfort, thumping her saddle ponderously, her muddy shoulder an example of offended dignity; by her side her small daughter and Saunders, the latter gesticulat-

ing as he spoke, his over-baggy breeches flapping in the breeze, his elbows wide, his head back. The sight did not cheer Peter ; his usually happy view of life was overcast, so much so that when Harrison, quitting reminiscences for a moment, commenced to question him as to his impressions of the new people, and queried delicately as to how Miss Martin, one of the great lights in the county, had appealed to him after their introduction, Peter responded with asperity that she reminded him of a breakfast cruet—pepper and vinegar, with a little oil for his millions thrown in. Harrison merely gurgled cheerfully, and returned to his tales of fences ; all men and women were friends to him.

The clouds had met and passed, lowering down from a heavy sky ; rain fell in bitter chilling gusts, faint gleams of lurid crimson showed low in the cloud-barred west. Harrison left them close to Oonagh, flying off the road in the darkness over a dim fence, and disappeared at a gallop, cheery good-nights trailing in his wake.

Peter and his father rode on together, Mr. Reidy talking softly, happily, as they went. They rode thus until they reached the wide gates of Ballydane, the stone lions crouching patiently at either side ; here Peter forged

ahead, and Miss Rochfort, for some reason, fell back.

"Good-night," she said softly. "I'll try to tell mother that it wasn't your fault. If she'll listen——"

"She won't," said Peter, with conviction, eyeing the stout form bitterly, but not unhappily. "She'll not; the bump was too heavy—too——' Here he became aware of laughter bubbling in the background, and, with another good-night, turned up the avenue, cantering on the grass, the brown mare stealing easily beneath him, the soft smell of late autumn, of rotting leaves, in his nostrils.

It was Cassidy who flew to help him down; Cassidy with information on his lips.

"I minds to it now, Masther Pether," he exclaimed happily. "I minds to the grey horse: 'twas on a day lasht year that I seen him. An' he to shweep mad over the tail of a cyart, an' to lay Patsy Rahilly's horse on the road as if 'twas shtone dead it 'twas. I minds to it all, how me a'nt's cousin towld me an' we pickin' Patsy up (the grey was sthreakin mad across the counthry) how he towld me that there wasn't a man born or bred could howld that same grey whin he'd clap his eye to the dogs. I knew I had

a mimory of him, an' whin I saw him comin' in to-night, all plasthered, I rimimbered, though 'twas like a dhream to me before——"

"It was a damn pity," said Peter, with sour intentness, looking down at his own mud-plastered clothes, "that you did not remember it a week ago, you—idiot." Then he went in.

"Well, the like of that now!" observed Cassidy. "An' I to recall date an' day for him, an' all me a'nt's cousin said an' all."

The grey horse, sixteen hands, pedigree unimpeachable, was relegated to the luggage cart, where, his unwilling nose borne upwards by a bearing rein, he spends his working days.

## CHAPTER VI

### HOW MRS. CASSIDY POISONED THE FOXES

TONY HARRISON remarked fervently, that he wished with all his heart that poultry could be abolished in Ireland.

"Might make eggs scarce," suggested Peter thoughtfully.

"Eat bacon, then," observed Harrison, with considerable irritation. He pulled a bundle of letters from his pocket, showing how various ladies, called respectively Maloney, Casey, Heggarty, and so forth, demanded instant and exorbitant payment for feathered tribes eaten by various foxes. Harrison read them through with a puckered brow.

Peter had come over to fetch Harrison for a day or two, and they were standing outside Mount Harrison, once described by Cassidy. It was a tumbledown old place, its high front stretching towards the soft skies. Shutters barred the broken window fronts; remnants of

plaster flaked the scarred walls; the hall door had blistered to a paintless brown. Outside, humping memories of flower-beds were thick with grass and weeds, a donkey picking up its living among the graves of fair scented things. Harrison never possessed a penny to waste on paint or plaster, though his own smoky den was packed with good old furniture, priceless prints hung on the dirty walls; treasures of china were stacked in the mouldy drawing-room; and the sideboard in the big dining-room was covered with a collection of ill-cleaned silver which, if it had been turned into money, would have kept its owner rich for a year; besides other chests of plate never opened. But Harrison had his ideas of pride, and though every acre was mortgaged, though the roof leaked, and the plaster was a memory, and fish and rabbits his staple food, these old things were sacred. There were specks of paint in the great half-ruined yards at the back, where the hunters lived and flourished; they must know no discomfort.

Mount Harrison was a pretty old place, only lacking money to make it perfection, the lawn in front sloping to a rushing stream, while beyond the woods a gorse-crowned hill nosed into the

sky, frowning down at the house. It was late December; a dark shadow lay along the crown of the distant Tulla hills, their bases golden brown. Clouds, sodden grey, shading to pearl, massed in the sky; the coming rain chilled the wind.

"Oh, it's all very well to laugh," said Harrison as Peter, with an audible lack of sympathy, read some of the appeals; "I wish you had to mind it all for a year." His handsome face clouded. "Now look here. What is to be done with Mrs. Cassidy? If she is not paid immediately for—two—no—for a Howdang cock, which she says the foxes 'ate on her,' and for several chickens, she says she'll be even with us. And you see," went on Harrison, "her cottage lies by Killeen gorse. In fact, the covert is actually on her land—it probably means poison. There's a thing for you. There's a fix to be in; especially as I hear it was her own dog ate the cock. I daresay the chickens are all right." He sank into a gloomy reverie, or what passed for one with Harrison, and sprang out of it, hastily observing with distinct fear, that "by all that was holy the woman herself was coming now"—he pointed to a jennet's trap at the swing gate.

It was even true ; attired in much majesty and a black bonnet, Mrs. Cassidy jolted towards them : to pull up on the grass-grown gravel, look askance at the waiting motor, and, with a display of woollen stockings, descend. She was a stout dame, with a lively complexion and bristling grey eyebrows, and she opened fire forthwith. Her letter was mild to the claims she now unfolded



One prize-bred cock deceased.

noisily. But, though Harrison looked frightened, he bent before the storm with the hideous aggravation of a willow sapling in a high wind, always darting back to the perpendicular as the blast roars by. He would not give way. He would not, on behalf of the Hunt, pay out two pounds for one prize-bred cock, deceased,

and the future father of many chickens, even though the said bird had been hatched "no less, from an egg slhipped by Mrs. Cassidy's cousin from Lady Magee's pin of fowls," this two pounds to be added to further claims for six chickens, one turkey, and two ducks, also deceased. "An' thim Howdang hins that I'm afther buyin' off Mary Brady, wid the combs roastin' off thim ready to lay," thundered Mrs. Cassidy, "goin' to waste on me now; d'ye see to the loss of that? Haven't I brought ye the feathers from his tail?"—here she suddenly reft forth some feathers and thrust them into Harrison's face—"for that's all I have left of him; but for the matther of the chickens I have them kep' to show ye, for, hearin' the hins screcchin', I ruz from me warrm bed before the divil's villain had time to whip thim out the old windy."

Harrison said something beneath his breath; outwardly he was sympathetic, but firm. He would pay one pound. But Mrs. Cassidy would have none of it. It was all or nothing. Her brow grew black, her complexion more cheery. She shed her brown shawl, pushed back her bonnet until it poised uneasily on a wisp of grey hair behind, and delivered her ultimatum.

"She had driven five mile to talk it out quite an' raisonable, lone widdy woman as she was, an' 'twasn't civility even she was met with"—her fiery eye sought Harrison—"an' her word doubted. But now 'twas come to this: if the money was not paid to her before next Wednesday—this was Saturday—she would dhrop something in the covert, an' the hunt club should find more dead than chickens an' a fine cock before thim. Yes, an' let them gaol her afterwards if they wished."

Then, muttering threats to the lowering skies, she mounted her car, smote the jennet heavily with her umbrella, and left, her face aflame, a last bitter remark echoing "that, afther all, thim that couldn't afford to mind their windies were no mark for dacent people's fowls," trailing in her wake.

Having resisted entreaties, it was clearly impossible to give in to threats; but Harrison's cheery brow was troubled, and he saw no light. Peter put him into the motor and drove him off to Ballydane, the car bumping down the deeply rutted avenue. "The old hag will do it, Peter. She'll poison Killeen and I'll get the blame." Harrison passed into the hall at Ballydane, enlarging on Mrs. Cassidy and his troubles. "I wish to

heaven the foxes had taken *her* out the windy," he added with heat. "I'd pay ten pounds for that.'

Cassidy, the useful footman, on duty for the afternoon, was going upstairs with a bucket of coals and some clean towels. He paused to listen.

"An' is that ould Mrs. Cassidy afther black-gyardin ye?" he inquired tenderly. "Don't ye belave a word from her. Maybe one hin the foxes took. Isn't she the bittherest ould woman in the county? Sure didn't poor Tom Cassidy pray to God to take him that he might be quit of her, an' I'm towld he ax'd Father John to thry to arrange to lave him always in purgathory if he thought the wife would go straight up above as she said she would. God rest the poor man's sowl wherever he is. And what did she say she'd do, sir?"

Harrison told the tale, inquiring if she was a relation. Cassidy put the towels into the coal-bucket and wiped his white head with a grimed hand ere he answered.

"As sure as ye dhraw the breath, she'll do it," he muttered. "Faix, no sir, she's nothin' to me. Sure we were kapin' cows beyant whin poor Tim's father hadn't even a pig in the kitchin Sthychneen she'll go for, 'tis all they think of; an she'll buy the sthuff at Fenessy in Oonagh, forby

she'd be afraid to be refused in Cahirvally; an she has a bit of a runnin' recnin' with the man here, so he might be in dread to say no to her."

"But if she doesn't get it here she'll write away," said Harrison impatiently.

"Thin—let her get it here." Cassidy drew nearer, waving his bucket. "There's many things ye could buy that's like to p'isin and wouldn't do a hap'orth of harm to the foxes. Misther Fenessy is all for the dogs—small blame to him, with what he sells for the sick horse—an' he'll tell ye." Then remarking that he "must be ramblin' on, for if he was caught in the hall carrin' up things for the housemaid the face would be swhep from him," he fled upstairs.



Cassidy put the towels into the coal-bucket.

"By jove!" said Peter.

"By jingo!" said Harrison. "He's a genius."

The car was still at the door, they went back to it and flew off up the wide road leading to Oonagh. The chemist's little shop stands close to the rushing river, where the great black mill-wheel turns slowly with sombre dripping spokes.

Harrison darted in to hold swift converse with the "docthor," and left, some minutes later, smiling happily, leaving Mr. Fenessy, also smiling, behind his counter. The arrangements with other chemists were simple and were made briefly, by letter, merely laying strict embargo on the sale of poisons to one Mrs. Cassidy, of Killeen. "So she's sure to get the stuff there," chuckled Harrison, writing letters with great distaste; he was not fond of a pen.

Mrs. Cassidy received no further communication from the Hunt, so, true to her word, Saturday saw her at Oonagh, demanding "one pound of stychneen to poison rats with." She asked for it aggressively, ready to break into a flood of angry argument if refused and the innocence of her motives questioned. But she was served readily. Fenessy dived into a drawer beneath the counter, producing, after a moment's rustling, a paper package, with "poison" red-lettered across its yielding surface. This he handed to her, with a remark that 'twas lively stuff, and in response to a query concerning price, named a marvellously small amount for a pound's weight of virulent poison.

"Will it work quick on bastes?" inquired Mrs. Cassidy, handling her package gingerly.

"If ye took some ye'd soon see," said Mr. Fenessy, developing an uneasy cough and engulfing his face in a mottled handkerchief. Having emerged from this shelter very red in the face, he bade Mrs. Cassidy a smiling good day and she went out, filled with a strong desire to quarrel with the words which she had not been obliged to utter. But triumph soon mastered this one disappointment. She had got her way, over-easily; now let the Hunt look to themselves; and she urged the thin jennet homewards along the narrow road beneath the sloping hills.

On her arrival at her home, she speedily introduced large quantities of the white powder into the now rotten carcases of her three dead chickens (the "Howdang's" corpse was missing, as the dog could have told) and started in the dusk for the covert. The night was still, the gorse a patch of gloom between its green banks; the hills towered black and grim against the faint blue of the sky. It was lonely out there beneath their shadow. But Mrs. Cassidy's thoughts were far from soft skies and lonely country; she scrambled over the bank into the covert, wading uneasily through the green prickly bushes until she was close to the earth, and then hurling the bodies down, waded back again, her heart filled

with a blissful sense of triumph and her legs with many pricks.

"There'll be more dead thin chickens in the mornin'," she declaimed as she scrambled out, rubbing a punctured leg. "Maybe they won't be too plazed, thim that wouldn't pay Janey Cassidy for the price of a few dead fowls. Yerra, the divil to thim furry bushes!" she burst out; "isn't it the quare baste that'd live in thim, an' the quare dogs that'd root him out."

All this James Cassidy, who in his boyhood's ragged clothes had dogged the lady's steps, reported faithfully to Peter and Harrison.

. . . . .

The next morning was a fair one; feathery clouds swept across the sky, pale glimpses of blue behind them. The meet was on a narrow road, winding along a hill. As they moved off up the steep ascent, men spoke cheerfully of the screaming scent which must await them. Harrison alone looked anxious when Killeen was mentioned as a certain evening find; plans go wrong, and he was certain to bear the blame if anything happened. A fox-hunter's life is built of constant disappointments, and moments of pure joy which wipe every previous sorrow out; this morning went with the majority. Knocking

gorse straggles along a steep hill, a thick covert of gorse and bramble, great pieces of rock jutting out among the tangle. Unfortunately, the country people are over-sporting there ; they gathered now, above, below, an eager, living fringe, thrilling to each note in covert, whooping out wild yells at a glimpse of the hunted fox ; dodging the shoulder of one horse, the heels of another ; smiling up at the cursing riders ; tearing out like lunatics when the harassed fox tried to break, and then, having hounded him back to covert with their yells, they were up on the bank again not unlike a flock of sombre roosting birds.

Headed at every side, poor Pug heard death at his heels, so making a last bid for life, he slipped through the undergrowth and darted out at one corner into a thick break of lacing thorns, only to find himself a fast prisoner with no way out, and the pack hot on his heels. Like a wave the country people poured down, seeking now for the life which they had sacrificed.

"Howld back ye'r dogs!" they yelled, as hounds crashed out and were beaten back with many blows. "Howld them back, huntsman!"—this to the master, who, half-choked by the effort to invent something new in the way of curses came thundering down the hill. "Give the baste

a tashte of air an' let him off! He can't pass through! Arrah, Patsy Rahilly, pull him out by the tail and let him go!" Patsy Rahilly, thus urged, advanced an eager hand, and as hastily withdrew it, for the maddened fox bared his teeth and snapped.

"He'd whip the finger from me," said Patsy, who was distinctly dubious. "Kape thim dogs back. Let ye."

"Take him by the tail an' swhing him out; he could niver rache ye so! Arrah, do it, man, before the dogs ates him; they're bawlin' with the madness to be at him!"

"He'd rache some part ov me," said Patsy sourly. "Let Mike Malone do it himself, as he's so anxious."

Mike Malone was thrust forward hastily, but at this moment the checked pack found a way round, and that fox's hopes and fears were ended; his requiem a volley of curses from a maddened master, and the growls of the sorrowful dispersing crowd, as to a man they reproached Patsy Rahilly for his want of quickness and lack of courage.

"My! but they're a very curious people," said little Carstairs, peering at the scene between the Behemoth's long ears.

"Over-sporting," said Peter regretfully, as they moved off.

After a couple of disappointments the hunt came jogging to Killeen. With a grim smile on her lips Mrs. Cassidy watched them come; a morning excursion to the gorse having assured her that the chickens were demolished. As she went across the field to the covert, Peter greeted her genially, Harrison smiling at her lowering face, while Miss Rochfort suddenly laughed—apparently at nothing.

"So you've thought better of it?" said Peter pleasantly.

"I'm a woman to me word, Misther Reidy an' Misther Harrison," said Mrs. Cassidy, puffing along. "An' if the rats have the p'isin I laid for thim dhragged to the covert, 'tis no fault ov mine."

There was no fear of a hunt, so instead of standing in the shelter of the gorse itself, she mounted a low green bank, almost invariably the first fence crossed, and listened. From this she peered into the green depths, waiting for the yell of some beast in torture—all poisons were summary in her eyes—and the subsequent investigations which would produce the stiffened corpses of her dead enemies. But instead came a low whimper, followed by a deep note with no

echo of pain in its depths. A crash of flying bodies in the gorse, pied heads rising and falling.

"Is it n'isin' they are . . . to a fox!" muttered Mrs. Cassidy. "It must be the p'isin. It *must*."

Was it? A big dog fox jumped over the bank and, with a whisk of his brush, slipped away beside her. "Tally! Tally! Look at him out! The fine fox he is! There he goes!" The field suddenly went mad; hats were crammed down, bridles tightened, hearts beat faster. Faint hearts went sneaking towards a distant gate. Hounds began to pour out of cover, hot on their fox.

"Give 'em time!" roared the master, tearing at the bank; then they settled to it, right beyond where Mrs. Cassidy stood, the bloodthirsty chorus sending a thrill of terror through her. Eager spirits could not be restrained, and as Mrs. Cassidy, horror-stricken, thought of gaining shelter, she saw a charge of horses bearing down at her. A horse's head coming straight towards you is at all times awe-inspiring. Mrs. Cassidy saw half a hundred, and the air was rent by her shrieks.

"Holy Mary Joseph, protect me!" as the first horse thudded by. "God in hivin, 'tis me lasth hour on earth, an' p'isin on me sowl!" Mrs. Cassidy flopped on her knees, praying for

her soul's welfare, while the field drifted past her, each thudding horse a horror. Her agony was prolonged by the fact that she had chosen the lowest spot to perch on, and also that refusing young horses came once and again, sliding and plunging almost against her.

"Oh! Vo! Vo! Vo!" shrilled Mrs. Cassidy,



Mrs. Cassidy flopped on her knees.

as she finished a long string of saints, and then prayed the faster.

"Stand still, old woman!" said a soldier from Cahirvally, in contemptuous Saxon accents, his swerving horse almost touching her. Past her, an evil dream of pink-coated death, flitted

Peter, calling "Bless you, Mrs. Cassidy," as he came. She was too stricken to respond. His boot had brushed her outstretched hand, and as she flung away from his touch, Miss Rochfort's bay cleared her a few inches on the other side, and Miss Rochfort still laughed—at nothing. It took some minutes as men count time, a lifetime measured by shrieking Mrs. Cassidy, ere the hunt swept on, and nothing but a scarred bank marked their tracks. Then, putty coloured, shaking, Mrs. Cassidy stumbled down and stood, looking into the still, peaceful gorse. She looked at the towering hill, dark above her, at the bank where death had passed her by, and her spirit quailed. "'Twas the foxes done it," she whispered. "'Twas a judgment, an' I wishful to kill thim. Bewitched they are, to make nothin' of all the p'isin I put in." And then, in return for the life she had never hoped to hold, she sank to her knees once more, vowing peace to the red inmate and his "pups" for evermore.

"Let ye shweep the bit from me mouth," she clamoured to the quiet gorse, "I'll not lay a hand on ye. But sure, in return ye might rimimber others and lave the widdy's hins alone."

This bargain made, she staggered home, and, until Norah Magee, her handmaiden, being

appalled by the entrance of a tottering, white-faced Mrs. Cassidy, who demanded a taste of whiskey; and who, as the fiery spirit returned her normal colour, recounted in awed whispers the tale of how the whole hunt had swept over her. "Fox, hounds, and huntsmin drhoppin' the legs on me shawl, thrunnin' leps off me back, stretchin' out over me head, nothin' but the blessid prayers to kape the life in me."

With stricken exclamations, Norah rose, wide-eyed, to look for muddy footprints; but, with a sudden access of temper which marked Mrs. Cassidy's recovery, curiosity was checked.

"Don't be afther touchin' me," she commanded. "I couldn't bear a finger with the bruises. Let ye be away to Henessy's for a quarther of tay an' sugar, an' ask thim to sthep over to hear the news. An' tell Father Doolan's housekeeper that there's nothin' but the poor breath left in me body. I'll brush me clothes up while ye'r gone."

Now it is recorded in the annals of the Cahirvally Hunt that the Killeen fox gave them a ten-mile gallop, across the big fields towards Oonagh, round to the left and right by Garvagh until horses rolled beaten into the big Garvagh banks, and finally they were run out of scent in the low-lying fields near Croagh, horses beaten to a trot

and the quick dusk falling. It was grey night when Peter and Harrison came jogging past Mrs. Cassidy's cottage on their homeward way, and pulled up to speak to her as she was in her doorway.

"By jove!" said Harrison cheerily. "Instead of poisoning those foxes you gave 'em champagne. I never saw such a fellow to travel: he fairly beat us."

Mrs. Cassidy, stern, sour-tempered, but still shaken, wheeled upon them.

"I knows nothing of sham panes," she growled, "but ye may take me word for it that niver as long as I live will I meddle with the foxes again, as I brought me life from the bank to-day. There's magic in some things."

"There is," said Harrison softly, tendering her a sovereign, which she took silently. "There is," he said, as he rode on beneath the deep shadows of the hills, and looked through the dimness to the twinkling lights of Oonagh. An entry in Mr. Fenessy's book would go far to explain the magic. It runs: "December 18th, 1 lb. Epsom Salts—Mrs. Jane Cassidy, Killeen. (As per order Mr. Harrison)." For many things resemble strychnine, and Epsom salts are harmless and may improve the wind. There were several fine hunts from Killeen that year.

## CHAPTER VII

### OF A JOURNEY AND AN AFTERNOON DINNER

MR. REIDY'S pilgrimage to Ballin village was made shortly after the first meet of the season. He had been born there; his grandfather lay in the little wind-swept churchyard. His father and mother had gone from it to America many years before. So the landau was ordered round—Mrs. Reidy declined all acquaintance with motor-cars — and the three drove past Oonagh village and along the narrow lonely road which leads to Ballin. Flat country ran at either side; a line to dream of when hounds crossed it, of small banks and big walls which a horse could double, hearing the stones chink beneath his feet. Then after a mile or two the road wound in under the hills, towering dark on their left. Burrows, gorse-grown, of mild height; Knockerne raising its grim black crest against the cloud-strewn sky, its surface scarred and black, its side fenced by treacherous banks.

On again, skirting the hill where Ballin clung, peering across the green valley. As they drove under the hills Mr. Reidy grew thoughtful ; each place held a memory of boyhood. Here, he half whispered, he had hunted for birds' nests ; there he recalled having terrified old Nance Naylan into something closely resembling a fit — his mouth curved at the thought—by coming down off the fairies' hill at dusk, armed with a scooped-out turnip, a candle, and an old sack.

The millionaire watched the passing fields as they passed on into the shelter of a wooded glen ; he seemed to see the ragged boy who played and fought with other ragged boys, now poor old men, while he drove past behind his four-hundred-guinea chestnuts, no one knowing him by sight. They would not recognise him down there, or know what brought him to the ill-kept graves on the hillside. He sighed once for the lost bare-footed youth with its full joy of living—then looked at Peter, and was content ; the boy was something to be proud of. They climbed up a steep narrow street, with dirty houses clinging limpet-like to its sides, to pull up at the door of the one small hotel — its name written large, odours of vile tobacco and stale drink drifting from its door. Here they left the horses,

and walked along the brow of the hill. The valley below was desolate, scarcely a cottage to be seen ; the heather-clad hills towered to their left, the west wind blew softly, urging the silver-edged clouds. Mr. Reidy stopped at a wooden gate, and they followed him into a narrow field, nestling into a cleft in the hill.

"Gone," he said quietly, standing still.

Bare gables, a fragment of rotting thatch, a few feet of crumbling wall marked what had once been a cottage.

"I was born in it," said Mr. Reidy slowly. "The thatch was yellow then in places, golden in the sun ; the potatoes grew back there ; there were hens and the pigs about. Now look at it. Well, I'd rather have it so."

The little squalid ruin had once held men and women who hoped and feared, though it was humanity of the class which hopes and fears little, but lives its life to gain sufficient bread, and dies happily, secure in the future. From its door had come the boy who now could count his gold in its millions. Dull cattle stared at them as they walked away ; a shaggy colt pursued them to the gate, nosing at Peter's dog. Mr. Reidy, very silent, opened another gate and led them by a narrow path down the hill, and up

to the graveyard by the impressive hideous chapel. There were humps for the unknown poor, here and there a headstone; one setting forth that it covered Patrick Reidy, aged 85 years.

"The queer old man," said Mr. Reidy gently. "Many's the days I'd rest on his knee, and listen to him telling me stories of the Little People up there on the Fairies' Hill, of the queer pishog—he was full of them: didn't they pass me three times under a cow to please him when I had the chin cough? An' I believed it all, down to the wicked little black ones that'd follow me if I missed to say my prayers."

The strong blur of the brogue clung to a tongue which had almost forgotten it as he spoke; he was little Mikey again, full of "yerra wishas" and "glory be's." Little Mikey who could learn so easily, and who had cried bitterly when he was booted with injunctions never to run barefoot again, for they meant to make a man of him.

Mrs. Reidy, who had taken it all placidly—her husband's birth gave her no qualms—now announced from the gate that she was very hungry; it was the first time she had spoken, and she delivered the words with due apology

She never liked to speak unless she had something pleasant to say. Mr. Reidy left the graves and took her arm; he said something in a low voice and apparently received a satisfactory answer, for he dropped the blurring brogue, and spoke as was his wont, his face content.

They went back slowly along the level green-banked road, looking up at Ballin hill; the gorse covert set like a dark emerald on its black sides. Then they turned into the little hotel where the horses rested, and having stumbled up a cross between a ladder and a staircase into a tiny stifling room, they demanded food.

Here Peter received a surprise, for the room was occupied by Miss Rochfort, looking rather lost in a very old covert coat and a wide sailor hat. She rose as they came in, explaining that she had ridden down to see a young horse, and was now waiting for some tea. Mrs. Reidy, having responded to her son's somewhat confused introduction, remarked firmly that tea was delightful, but she wanted something more, and considered the question as the landlady, urbane and large, her hands crossed over a check apron, appeared at the door. Peter suggested eggs—he had caught a dark glimpse of the kitchen as he passed; but Mrs. Malone broke in with a

suggestion of chops. Martin Hannon had a sweet bit of mutton hanging, "for he killed his honour's, Mr. Knox's, cheep but three days ago, an' she passin' the shop the night before, she saw the rack hangin'."

"Well, it's not there now," said Miss Rochfort briefly, closing that gate of hope.

Mrs. Malone remarked, rubbing her hands, that "'twas very blightsome it should be gone on thim," and Mrs. Reidy, after a moment's thought, suggested chicken. "You are sure to have a chicken," she said, with mild decision. "Every one has chickens."

"A fowl, is it?" Mrs. Malone swallowed something audibly, and appeared to wrestle with an inward shock. "Well now, sure 'twas that thoughtsome of her honour's ladyship, and they had one below; twinty minnits would see it ready an' all."

"I knew," said Mrs. Reidy. "There are always chickens."

Miss Rochfort remarked thoughtfully, as the landlady sped downstairs, that she had never known them have anything ready before.

Shrill orders echoed from the kitchen; judging by the sounds which followed, at least six people were running hurriedly. The little window

looked out on the yard; Peter was close to it. Following heated arguments he heard a hideous commotion, shrill squawks of hunted fowl, the shriller yarl of one cornered, followed by the agitated cluck of the remainder; then a black-haired girl scurried across the yard, calling to some unseen person to "howld on."

At this point Peter caught Miss Rochfort's eye, and left the window with some haste; his thoughts were confused. They sat upon the humpy little sofa, talking softly, until Peter found diffident voice to inquire for Lady Rochfort's health. "She was so fearfully cross when I upset her," he said humbly.

"Well, most people would have been," said Miss Rochfort. "You seem fated to annoy her. I wish you could have seen poor mother's habit drying next day. You see, you fell on your face, but she—" here she stopped abruptly, and turned a lively pink.

"Exactly," said Peter gravely, a faint twinkle in his eye alone betraying his memory of how her ladyship had fallen.

The room was hot; Mrs. Reidy, still smiling, had dropped asleep, her expensive hat over one ear; Mr. Reidy, lost in thought, looked into the narrow street. Sounds of heated preparation drifted up the staircase; a heavy waft of cooking

cabbage slid in and stayed; but the chicken came not. Mrs. Malone heaved in her breathless person at intervals, first with a tablecloth, then some knives, a pound of butter, forks, and each time assured them urbanely that "a minnit more" must bring the dinner.



Mrs. Reidy had dropped asleep.

"I niver see a fowl to be so long in the pot," she announced in answer to the last plaintive inquiry, as she flanked the slab of butter by a loaf of squeezed-up bread, a shred of brown papery crust adhering to it. "I med a dhrive at him but now with a fork, an' you'd think he wasn't down a minnit."

Miss Rochfort hastily remarked that she would take her tea; she had been bidden to the feast, but she proffered excuses concerning time, and avoided Peter's eye. She urged Mrs. Malone to bring her a cup of tea immediately. A faint cry rose from the depths below.

"God be praised, 'tis done at last!" Mrs. Malone rolled to the door, and Miss Rochfort's excuses were cut short by the appearance of the black-haired damsel, visible doleful tears streaking her face, carrying an enormous fowl, reposing in a sea of pale gravy. Its legs and wings were wildly displayed, its great combed head reposed peacefully tucked to its side. The black-haired damsel, hailed as Mary Kate, skirted agilely to the table, keeping well away from her mistress, who, announcing that "she'd make down for the tay," disappeared. Mrs. Reidy, remarking hungrily that she knew the good woman would have a chicken, left her easy chair to come to the table.

Another damsel, with unconfined tresses, now thrust a nose round the door, and Mary Kate, having rescued and dumped down a brimming dish of cabbage, announced with an audible sniff that "the food was waitin' on thim." Then, with a last doleful glance she fled.

Peter took the carving-knife dubiously—he felt that he had seen it lately; he eyed the red comb, the mighty spurs; he struck at the mighty breast: Mrs. Malone, who was leaving, encouraging him by the remark that "'twas a fine chicken of an autumn clutch, an' tindher as a mushroom."

The odours of food had made the little room very stuffy. Mr. Reidy, having wrestled with the front window, tried the back one, and succeeded in raising it, at the same time remonstrating hospitably with Miss Rochfort, who had commenced her tea. Peter struck the yellow breast a blow which would have divided iron. But ere he could proceed, the sound of a voice upraised in bitter trouble drifted to them through the open window. "Mamma, mamma!" it shrilled; "ye sint the girrls to kill a hin, an' Mary Kate has the head whipped of me new prize cock that I hatched out lasht year passed."

Peter, gazing at the reposing head, remarked softly that this was not strictly accurate.

"Worth pounds he was, the crayture," went on the tearful voice, "an' feed from me hand he would. Oh—Vo! Vo! Vo!"

The voices mingled in confusion, Mrs. Malone's hotly furious, asking if this were true; tearful murmurs clearly emanating from Mary Kate, rising to crescendo as she proceeded, detailing the horrors of an accident in the dimness of the cowshed, with the "flusther the missus had her in to have a hin dead an' plucked an' cooked while ye'd wink ye'r eye." And how she plucked him away in the scullery; "an' 'twas no

wondther he took the time t' bile with the great legs he had on him." Here the voice melted into tears; a storm of bitter invective fell on Mary Kate's penitent head, and Peter, rising softly, shut the window.

No one felt hungry for chicken; a piece was wrested from it for Peter's dog, who devoured it without comment; the others drank a little tea, and the carriage was ordered.

"I do not think," said Miss Rochfort, as she wrapped her skirt about her and went downstairs, "that I ever wish to see a chicken again."

"And I—I, who saw them go forth to slay," said Peter, with emotion, as he put her up.

"Do you like my horse?" she said hastily, changing the subject.

"A bit on the small side," said Peter.

"Ah! but think of his breeding," said the girl. "He's almost thoroughbred, and there's a great deal in a pedigree."

"I sometimes wish," said Peter, adjusting her straps, "that I'd got one."

"I—I—wish you had," said the lady, and then, pink-faced, clattered rapidly out of the yard.

Mrs. Reidy was still very hungry; she waited disconsolately at the front door, her habitual cheeriness clouded. Now, among the first callers

at Ballydane had been the Hanlons, people of the squireen class, who arrived in an inside car with the general horse in the shafts, and the general man, wearing an uneasy coat, on the box. As the chestnut horses prepared to slide down the steep hill, the Reidys were encountered by this Mr. Hanlon, with a whiskey bottle under his arm and a bag of biscuits in his hand. With hasty hospitality he asked them to a cup of tea, indicating a roof crouching in a group of fir-trees as his home. A vision of cakes was comforting; Mrs. Reidy accepted with alacrity.

Mr. Hanlon was a stout little man with a hilly waistcoat and bandy knees, long strangers to him. He climbed in nimbly, peering admiringly at the high-stepping horses. "It's heartnin' to sit behind their likes," he said heartily. "I never saw their equals to knock away a road." Here he rose to bid the coachman stop at the next iron gate, and, not receiving immediate answer, smote that dignified worthy emphatically in the back with the whiskey bottle, this inducing a rapid stop by a rusty gate propped open with a big stone. The avenue was a rutty track across a field, and then progress was stopped by another gate, which was shut.

"Remain above, young man," commanded Mr. Hanlon to the descending footman. "There's

hardly a one besides meself can close that gate after them, and it troubles me sometimes. You wouldn't believe, now, the times the cows and the sheeps comes in on account of its crossness."

In these circumstances it would have appeared wiser to alter the catch, but apparently Mr. Hanlon had not thought of that.

He now ordered them to drive on to the front door and ring, and bade the "young man put powder in the pull, for the bell wire was half broke." He would follow them.

The chestnuts flourished through an edging tangled of untrimmed laurels, drawing up at a low white house, with drunken venetian blinds in the front windows.

The footman having used all his strength, a great peal rang through the house, followed by the uneven yelping of many small dogs, Peter's dog replying with strangled growls. A minute later steps echoed, and some one wrestled with the inner door.

"In the name of glory, Timsie O'Donnel, but ye have the bell gone for good an' all!" said a high-pitched, angry voice. "It lepped off the wall above me head, an' is sthuck to the far ceilin'. An' I tellin' ye, always to run round an' let a call. Have ye the cottage loaves, Timsie?—for

the missis likes to skin round the crusts." Here she further remarked that "she wished the divil himself might ate the lock for the way it had sthuck on her, for Saint Pether himself wouldn't turn it," and bade Timsie "have the bread waitin' on her."

The key screeched rustily at last, and a large unkempt damsel, with her hair half down and half in curl papers, bearing a large dish in her hands, appeared, hot with anger, before them, still calling vengeance upon Timsie. The vision of waiting footman and large carriage was too much for her; with a wailing appeal to several saints, she dropped the dish and fled, muttering something about a baker as she went. But, a minute later, as Mr. Hanlon hove into view, she was back, a clean apron on one side of her skirt, clamping her hair to her head with a collection of mouth-carried hairpins as she came.

"Faith, ye must be afther excusin' me," she said, red-cheeked, to Peter; the footman was threatening apoplexy, and had retired. "If 'tis the missus ye want, will ye sthep inside?"

Mr. Hanlon, arriving, swept them in, letting a pleased eye fall on the white apron, and bidding Annie Jane to open the parlour door.

Annie Jane, still occupied with her hair and muttering troubled words concerning bakers as

she went, ushered them into a square, dim little room, to a frantic, yapping chorus from unseen regions. Mr. Hanlon plucked some brambles from the chairs, explaining that "if they didn't keep them on the dogs would ruin the furniture. Ten terriers his sister kept; maybe they heard them."

Peter said he thought he heard one or two, and bounded with decision from his chair, having encountered an unremoved thorn. Mr. Hanlon sympathised deeply; ordered Annie Jane to lay a match on the fire, and placed the whiskey bottle on the piano.

It was a damp, uncomfortable little place, furnished in magenta plush and green cushions. Magenta roses hopped aggressively across a green carpet, and were repeated in a cruder shade on the walls. Little brackets strayed aimlessly on the walls, and a bazaar relic, a cake-tray tied with ribbons, stood gravely by itself on a round table. Just as Mrs. Reidy was making a happy remark concerning the delights of a comfortable chair, the plunging they had heard upstairs ceased, and Miss Hanlon, very breathless, hooking something as she entered, rushed in. Her silk blouse was full to overflowing, and there were sundry gaps in her array of which she was mercifully unconscious.

Annie Jane, having compassed a bristling fringe, now bustled in with tea; a brown teapot and an old silver sugar-bowl jostling on the tray, further flanked by a crown Derby cream-jug and thick kitchen-cups. She removed the cake-tray from its table, dumped down the tray and a plate of hard sugar-tipped biscuits, and withdrew.

Peter was hungry, but he abandoned the contest after the second pink biscuit, the mingled flavour of plaster of Paris and hair-oil checking his appetite. He proffered a plaintive request for bread and butter.

"It was most unfortunate"—Miss Hanlon blushed heavily, and drew a creaking breath—"but the butter was out. They made none in winter themselves, and though she had a boy away to Noonans to borry a slice, it was some distance off. She was ashamed, and they out all day and hungry." (They had confessed to a lack of lunch.) "But she and Jim always took a bit of dinner at five. If they'd come in to that—" she added diffidently. They were at the stage when they would have come in to anything. A call down the kitchen stairs brought Annie Jane, who, on being told to "bring up the dinner," muttered "Mother of hivin!" and fled, to

announce a minute later that "the mate was waitin' on thim." She was clearly capable.

They were led into a hot little dining-room, and it was evident that they would not starve. A great leg of mutton in a sea of sauce smiled from one end; a pig's head reposed on a bed of perfectly cooked cabbage; floury potatoes were piled high on a flat dish; Mr. Hanlon, bringing in the whiskey bottle, laid it down as a centre-piece. The forks were rat-tail, the knives horn-handled, the plates old blue, chipped but violently hot. They fell-to hungrily, eating boiled mutton and pig's face—on one plate—with shameless greed, and drinking, less greedily, the brimming glasses of fiery whiskey which were urged on them, Mr. Hanlon watching throughout with the pure joy which an Irishman takes in seeing his substance devoured. They had eaten quite enough when Annie Jane kicked the door open, bearing a large piece of boiled beef, which she laid down, and took away the mutton. Mr. Hanlon retained the carving knife and fork, but his guests shook determined heads, memories of mutton and pig's face forbidding.

"Ah, but ye must, now"—Mr. Hanlon's red face fell visibly—"ye must indeed. A fine hearty man like yerself, Mr. Reidy, to eat so

little! Just a taste. I tell ye there's great shelter behind a piece of beef."

So, despite inclination, Peter and his father had to take some sheltering beef, wash it down with more fiery whiskey, and then came hot tea and potato cakes swimming in butter, which Annie Jane announced "her sisther clapped together an' shlapped into the oven whin she saw them comin'." Whoever "shlapped" them, they were supremely good. But they felt that a five-o'clock dinner at Mr. Jim Hanlon's was not a thing to be lightly repeated. At the last, being confronted with the alternative of more whiskey or a glass of what Mr. Hanlon called port wine, and which looked rather like ink and water thickened with sugar, they fell hastily on the whiskey; but Peter knew how misty the hall was as he left, and what a surprising amount of pitfalls there were before he got to the cool air outside, as he walked forth with careful gravity.

"'Twas a pity poor little Miss Rochfort was not there," said Mr. Reidy next day.

"Thank God she was *not*," said Peter, conscious of a digestion which felt as if it were filled by molten lead, uneasy eyes and a pallid face.

## CHAPTER VIII

### HOW PETER TOOK A PACK OF HARRIERS

PETER REIDY'S idea of hunting a pack of harriers originated in the over-plentiful supply of hares arriving at Ballydane kitchen. As, for the fourth time in a week, Peter helped himself to hare, he suddenly remarked that it would be much more sporting to hunt hares than to eat them, and the bright idea sprang, Minerva like, fully formed from his brain. The fox-hounds only hunted three days a week; two of the remaining could be pleasantly filled in with hare-hunting. Of course it might not be fast work, but there would be plenty of lepping, and some excitement, and as for the small difficulty of hunting a pack of hounds, Peter thought that would be easy work. He had merely to learn a few yells, practise a little bad language, look important, and the thing was done.

He broached the notion at dessert; it met with immediate approval from his father, while Cassidy

stopped dead, a decanter of port poised in his hand, to mutter admiring comments, and proffer suggestions which died into murmurs on being repressed. It all seemed to work out easily ; if people were paid, they would of course preserve the hares, which they now poached or coursed. Also, there was the joy pertaining to being a master—of anything—

"Mr. Peter Reidy's Harriers will meet as follows :—"

all duly inscribed on a post-card. Money also could settle all damages ; this was one of the moments when Peter was not economical. Ere he sought his bed that night, he had got far enough to write to London for correct green clothes and a hunting-cap, quite oblivious of the possibilities of obstacles. He wished to spring upon a delighted county as a surprise. Cassidy's repressed murmurs found voice as he called Peter, very late, and announcing apologetically from the door that "the morning had sthole on him." Peter was opening his eyes a little crossly ; he had suddenly remembered that finding a pack of hounds might be a little difficult, and he wished to start at once. But Cassidy flung the shutters back and held forth.

"To hunt hares was the gran' plan; long ago there was always a pack. There were flocks of hares below in the bogs, runnin' like childer on the sthreets—an', for a thrifle, they could be kep';



Cassidy stopped dead, with a decanter of port.

an' for hounds now"—Cassidy waved the hot-water can, the nozzle trickling gently—"for hounds, if no great pack was wanted there was providence in it—no less—for lasht Sunday,

whin he was away to the hurlin' match, he had heard how one Martin Harty, huntsman of a pack of foot dogs down at Tulla, wished to be out of thim same. Wouldn't it be the chance, and they to be ready an' all no less, well used to huntin'!"

It was providence, without doubt. Peter shot from his bed, full of anticipation; he courted a cold at the open window, looking out at the distant stretches of the country, and imagining merry little spurts across them with his own hounds, in pursuit of the wily hare. Consequently, though he had arisen in good time, he was late for breakfast. A "bit of a note," as advised by Cassidy, brought Mr. Harty post-haste in response. He was a frowsy-looking person, with abnormally developed calves, a cunning mouth, and blue childlike eyes. He explained to Peter that he, himself, was going to "Ameriky, an' there was no proper man down wesht to take his place. Also that the said pack would be a Godsind to his honour, for they'd give shpoort all day, an' warrm ye ears with a n'ise they'd kape up, an' good shpeedy dogs too, for many rode with them, they could go that well."

After some further blandishments, Martin Harty of course mentioned the name of another man who wished to buy the dogs, and then named

a price, which seemed very reasonable to Peter, to include seven couple and a half of "shpoortin' dogs," and all the fun they would give. Still, as he was Peter, he haggled, with the result that Mr. Harty, having sworn he was a heavy loser in the deal, nevertheless took the offer and promised to bring the pack within a week.

Some outhouses in the far yard were speedily converted into temporary kennels; some sacks of food arrived from Cahirvally, one of the grooms was bribed into promises of boiling, and the arrangements were complete. Magee, his face set grimly, watched the hurried preparations with interest, and even unbent to inquire from Peter what he had paid for the pack; as Peter, a hammer in hand and several things in his mouth, paused to tell him, Magee said nothing, but the long whistle which rent the still air was not comforting; it caused Peter to drive nails with some irritation, and a faint wish that the head groom's body could be beneath the blows. Constant superiority waxes annoying. In the meantime he had secured, through the useful *Irish Times*, a young man who had whipped, and occasionally hunted, a well-known pack of harriers, now given up, who could come immediately, bringing his clothes with him.

On the appointed day the hounds arrived at Oonagh in a truck, and were chaperoned to Ballydane by their late owner and Cassidy, the former confiding to the latter that "he might as well come with them, for otherwise the divil himself wouldn't dhrive thim along the roads."

When Cairns brought word to say that the new dogs were arrived, Peter hurled himself out, followed at gentler paces by Carstairs and his father. He felt the thrill of possession as he saw the hounds assembled in a bunch round Harty and secured by many varieties of strings, seven couple (the half was missing) of flat-loined, blear-eyed, long-backed, crooked-legged brutes, of various ages, and with something more than a suspicion of various breeds. The new whip, emerging hurriedly from the kitchen, said, "My God above me!" walking several times round the collection, bereft of further speech. To Peter a hound was a hound; still he looked a little dubiously at his property, venturing on a feeble suggestion that they were "not—very—like the fox-hounds." At this point he was contemptuously quelled by the late owner, who said that these were harriers, and therefore "teetotally differential."

Mr. Harty then proceeded to point out some of his favourites, calling them by name. "Spinsther,

Spinsther!"—this to an elderly lady whose figure was injured by her maternal duties. "That's Spinsther, ye'r honour. Begob, whin she claps her nose to a smhell she'll sthick to it; faix, ye might bawl for a week an' ye couldn't lift her from it, she's that eager an' thrue." Here he stroked his chin and appeared to recall an unpleasing memory. "An' there's Beauty. Beauty!"—he indicated a large pied hound with a pointer's nose and a whip tail, which wagged vigorously. "That's the lad to chase for ye an' to shpeak." At this moment Beauty espied a passing hen, and all but throttled his companion in leash by his fervent anxiety to chase that, while he threw up his head with a long drawn yowl. "That's the shpoortin' dog for ye," said Harty, without rebuke. "An' there's Dairymaid—ah, that's the lady to pull down a hare for ye; I tell ye, if ye weren't fine an' convanient 'tis little ye might find left. An' Dan. Danny!"—a fat hound, not unlike a lemon-and-white dachshund, looked up. "That Dan is the thruest of thim all, niver mistakin' what he's afther, but he's a bit lazy; ye musht tell ye'r man not to shpare a taste of whip to kape him up." The new whip again called upon his God, faintly. "But sure ye'll find it all out for yerself," said

Mr. Harty cheerfully, as he swallowed a large glass of raw whiskey and pocketed Peter's cheque. "I'm the sorry man to be sellin' thim at all, an' may ye have as many long days' shpoort with thim as I've had meself."

The new whip produced a pencil and some paper, and with his mouth very depressed, proceeded to write down the hounds' names, groaning, as if in pain, over each animal.

Then, with some difficulty, the pack were ushered to their kennels, a proceeding viewed with extreme disfavour by the late owner. "Ivry man round kep' a dog or two, just accordin' to what he'd have," he said dubiously. "God sind ye have ye'r compliment in the mornin', housed up like that. There's Beauty now, he'd ate half the dogs in the counthry; him an' Chanter is constant in hoults."

Mr. Harty went away, providence had to be trusted, and the hounds were left alone. Peter hovered round them, staring at them with emotion.

"Think they'll hunt all right?" he inquired of Gleeson, the whip.

Gleeson remarked drily that he felt sure they would hunt "anything," and Peter went in contented, trilling hunting songs and resolving great ideas as he went. Some men were

born to hunt hounds; he would be one of them. He had poured over Jorrocks; his mind was not free from a picture of a certain green-coated master, pondering head on hand for a second's space, and then knowing by intuition which way that hare had gone. After that a galloping cast—Peter was all for speed—and away again. (It is perhaps needless to add here that Peter had never hunted with harriers.)

He found Carstairs in the library, poring hot-cheeked over sporting illustrations, and finally drawing down Peter's wrath by remarking joyously that he'd just found a picture of a hound which was not unlike one of the new pack—they both had black spots over the tail. He was hurt when Peter reft the book from him with unkind remarks concerning The Behemoth and the inch tape.

Then Peter forgot his irritation, and recalled the fact that the morrow's fixture was at Knockdare, not only fifteen miles away, but a bad woodland meet. Why not, instead, try his own new hounds, and get used to them before he had a published meet? He immediately despatched a note to Harrison, asking him to come to help, and another to Miss Rochfort, saying which direction he would go in, with a suggestion that

it would be an excellent opportunity for schooling young horses. Cassidy was promptly sent forth to the night to warn some of his many friends who were to act as beaters, and again Peter was contented.

He went to sleep that night lulled by a distant sound of many snarling voices upraised to the stars; the chorus rose high towards morning, until Cassidy brought the cheerful intelligence that "two of the new dogs was already in ribbons no less," and that "the cook the missus had such sthore by was like to give warning, for she was awake all night with the n'ise, an' the head was now roastin' off her with the pain drivin' through it."

Peter checked these confidences somewhat chilly; he was more pleased by assurances that beaters had been procured who were prepared to guarantee a supply of hares for the day. Cassidy then reached the door, but hesitated there, first on one leg and then on the other, until he blurted forth a request to be allowed to come too. He still had the "ridin' throuser he had used at Sir James', an' he could take out the young three-year-old or the grey from the luggage cyart, an' sure he'd be mighty useful to whip the dogs." Here he paused with so red and wistful a visage,

that Peter grinned and gave permission to his henchman to ride the young horse. Cassidy fled wildly, his face aglow, to appear after breakfast arrayed in the "ridin' throuser" mentioned, with horse bandages in lieu of gaiters, and a very old coat.




Cassidy in "ridin' throusers," with bandages in lieu of gaiters.

Peter's visit to the yard having revealed a kennel full of hungry hounds; two bandaged invalids recovering in separate outhouses, and the whip attending to their wounds with a distinct absence of sympathy, he returned slightly thoughtful to his room. However, at a few minutes to

twelve the new M.H.H. appeared at the hall door, correctly attired, even for this off-day, and a wide smile beneath the peak of his velvet cap Harrison, who appeared to represent the field rode up, arriving full of unslaked curiosity, which Peter was only too anxious to appease. He revolved upon the wide steps telling of his sudden idea, of the haste with which he had worked it out, of the hounds he had found and bought—here Harrison remarked, "My aunt! The Tulla harriers," and had a nasty choking fit—of the great fun they would now have, and so forth. By this time Peter had reached the gravel and was spinning round Harrison's horse.

"But as to—hunting them—" observed that gentleman, mastering his choking fit and facing Peter.

Peter told him, cheerfully, that hunting was easily learnt, especially with a pack of seasoned hounds who could probably do it all for themselves.

Harrison replied, thoughtfully, that, from what he had heard of the Tulla "baygles," he thought they probably would. He then inquired for the hounds.

Peter said they were coming, and at this moment, heralded by a burst of music, they

came. A wave of white and tan and black poured forth round the evergreens. It was perhaps not precisely the entrance that a master of hounds would have chosen for his pack if Lafayette or Fry had come to photograph them, for Dairymaid launched herself into view in hot pursuit of nothing; Beauty, pursued by Cassidy, was mouthing a dead chicken, and the new whip, his nerves quite out of control, was screaming in the wake of the rest. Harrison, whip in hand, headed the rush, the pack getting together sulkily, Beauty bolting down the last chicken leg in haste and with an anxious look at Harrison, which suggested bitter memories of food reft from her jaws.

"My God!" said Harrison tersely, looking down at the collection.

Now this was just what the new whip had remarked. Peter frowned, it was not only monotonous, but it did not seem to bear on a pack of hounds and their points. He checked an explanation from Cassidy as to Beauty's having got into the poultry-yard and the consequent state of "Moll's temper, she an' the cook ra'sin' blue murther above," mounted his horse and rode off, the pack, driven there by the three men, fairly near his heels. Carstairs, on The Behemoth, drifted into sight

as they started, his mind overstored by a night's reading, over-full of wise saws as to how to hunt a pack of hounds. He meant to help.

They jogged out the back way, making for the low-lying lands about Knock Hill. It was a silvery morning, with every prospect of scent, flitting sunshine behind the light clouds, a west wind blowing softly. As they turned out the back gate they met Miss Rochfort riding her young horse Arvagh; she started carefully when she saw them, and then explained to Harrison and Carstairs, at some length, how her mother had gone to Knockdare, and she had remained at home—which appeared to be obvious—and how she had come out to exercise; and they were assenting with grave interest when Cassidy pushed forward anxiously to inquire if the bit of a note reached her—whereupon Miss Rochfort turned very pink, fell upon Cassidy in an undertone, and rode apart for a space.

A mile or two further on they met the beaters, three or four lively young men armed with sticks and unlimited hope, who babbled to Peter of hares till he looked skyward, half expecting to see a flight of these wily animals on the wing, and then they turned off the road into a marshy field, spotted with clumps of rushes. Bang! bang!

slap! went the sticks into every clump; crack! went the whips. Peter was silent.

"Man, you must talk to them," said Harrison severely, indicating the hounds as they spread out in a leisurely manner, inspecting the rushy ground.

"Hoic! Hoic!" said Peter with feeble inspiration. "Yoii over there."

Here the new whip interposed with quiet firmness, and suggested that such words as "Rouse her! Push her out! Whoy, there! Puss! Puss!" were the cries he had been accustomed to.

Peter looked round. "Whoy, there! Roust her out! Push her up! Whoy, there! Puss!" piped Peter loudly, very red in the face, feeling that his upraised voice was not musical, and the duties of a master of harriers something more than nominal. Moreover, the hounds turned and looked up at him with interested surprise. He then suggested, with asperity, that Car should do it, as a screech from him would rouse every hare in the country.

But Harrison remarked firmly that it was Peter's business, and he'd soon learn, and lashed some bushes fervently, muttering "Hi, Puss!" as he did so.

"Whoy, there!" piped Peter, "Roust her up

there." Beauty abandoned searching and stood gravely contemplating the master.

"Oh, I wonder what on earth they're used to!" he said with heat.

Harrison's suggestion of "let ye dhraw he out ye divils schamers!" not being received with enthusiasm, they worked slowly along, beating energetically. Just then Beauty, who was on ahead, yowled wildly, going off at score down a hedge; Peter sped like an arrow to the note, in time to see some birds fly startled from their cover. "Ware blackbird, you!" cried Peter, forgetting tradition and lashing at Beauty's tail. "Surely they wouldn't have opened on those birds?" he added blankly.

"God knows!" said Harrison. "Maybe they're a bit bored. Are there no hares here, boys?" he added to the beaters.

There was a general emphatic chorus to assure him that there were, "only yesterday pasht they had been seen playing out in the fields like chilther, no less." Harrison interrupted at this point to tell them to get on to Knock bog, for they knew well there was never more than an odd hare about here; and they turned towards the towering peak.

Their way lay past a nest of cottages, the brown bog land close beyond. The fence leading to the

road near the houses was high and awkward. Peter suggested going further down to look for a soft spot, for Miss Rochfort's young one was far from safe. They found a low place by some bushes, and even here Arvagh rushed at the fence, slipped badly, and landed on his head outside.

"You ought not to ride those brutes," said Peter through his teeth.

"These—or nothing," answered Miss Rochfort. "If I didn't make a little money for father, I should have to . . ."

"What?" queried Peter eagerly.

"Oh, nothing," she said quietly. "At least nothing that matters. Arvagh is to give me a little grace, I hope—eh, old man!"—she patted the horse's neck, and he responded with an awkward bound. He was a big brown, with a sullen head, and a great half-developed frame; little Moira Rochfort representing about half his proper burden.

"I wish," said Peter, "I—wish——"

What, was lost in obscurity, for a great commotion bore down the wind to them, a babel of hounds' tongues, piercing shrieks and men's voices.

"Whip off thim dogs! Whip off thim dogs!"

yelled Cassidy's voice, high in agony. He was down, leading the young horse across the fence, dangling at the bridle's end upon the bank, the youngster objecting to the jump. "For the love ov God, will ye whip thim off? They're afther Mrs. Dillon's turkeys that she's fattenin' for the market, an' 'twill be a matther of pounds, no less. Oh, come up, ye son of a schamer, come up till I gets to the dogs!"

Thus entreated, the young horse came up, its bridle was flung into Peter's hand, and Cassidy fled, hurricane like, to the rescue. The whole pack were baying round a small cottage; Harrison and the whip were quite inadequate: one turkey lay dead on the field, Beauty and Colleen disputing its carcass; the others were protected by their furious wailing owner, who beat off her canine assailants with an iron ladle. "The divil swheep such dogs!" she declaimed, as the now excited pack fell back beneath the hail of blows and darted away over a low fence. This was a matter of half a sovereign, which was duly paid by Peter, Harrison rocking with unsympathetic laughter. But, as the money was paid, a further wild yell announced further trouble; it resulted from the fact that some of the pack had reached the pigs' food bought and paid for by one Mrs.

O'Mahoney, a lady who described herself, loudly, as "a lone widdy," and called for vengeance "on thim that could not fill their own dogs' sthomachs, but must sind thim forth to take the food of the poor widdy's pigs." This injury was cheap at half a crown. The whip, Cassidy, and the beaters were now doing a gymnastic display among manure heaps and across pigsties, and were thick with many unclean things, ere hounds were whipped away from Mrs. Magee's hens, got off doing Mrs. Hannan's goats to death, dragged from Mrs. M'Henney's house, and finally assembled on the road beyond the cottages.

"Oh, no doubt as to their being 'shpoortin' dogs,'" said Peter gloomily. "For heaven's sake, don't let us go near any more houses to-day; it makes hunting too expensive."

"Fine thing, a pack of harriers," said Harrison.

"What's that, Carstairs?"—for Carstairs appeared, round-eyed, on his mighty steed, babbling hurriedly. "Hi! Peter, Car says there's another old woman who says the n'ise of the dogs have med her dead grandmother throw a fit—oh! I beg your pardon Car—her dead grandmother's a'nt that was stayin' with her—frightened into a fit, and she wants money for it.'

Peter, remarking with dignity that so far as he

was concerned, the dead grandmother's aunt might remain in the fit, jumped the fence by the road and cantered on.

"They certainly do seem inclined to hunt," said Miss Rochfort, comforting softly.

"Give shpoort all day," said Peter, grimly. "Yes, they appear to. Look here, you men, is there a hare in this bog or not?" His voice rasped sharply.

The beaters, whose numbers had been swelled by several recruits, hurled themselves into the tussocky ground, and, with alarming suddenness, a big hare rose, scudding like the wind across the bog. The men yelled wildly, the pack went mad; with a hundred assorted yowls, they flung themselves on the trail which led across the tussocky, treacherous bogland, lines of ominous shimmering water barring it. Peter hurried after them, deaf to warning yells—Harrison leading the others along the base of the hill—and was wakened to a sense of his folly by encountering a bar of brown water, edged with peaty yielding banks. He slid handsomely into the cool depths, to emerge on the further side coated with black slime, hung about with bog-weed, and to gather further comfort by a vision of the others crossing by a bridge.

He plunged on, in and out of slimy bog holes, over humping tussocks, through churning peat, till he reached the far side, where the green fields were hard beneath his hoofs, and he found his hounds at fault. The "foot dogs" were quite used to checks, they were also quite used to puzzling it out for themselves, and were distinctly confused by the rush of horses about them. They would have nosed out the line in their own good time, had not Peter thundered on to them, fully possessed by ideas, fixed and mixed, as to hunting, and now somewhat in the order of a flock of sheep pursued by a strange dog. His one coherent notion was that all hunts must be on, and therefore the line must be on, and despite Cassidy's high-voiced warning that "there niver was a hare that sthopped yit that didn't run sthraight on back ag'in," he and the bewildered whip slashed forward the bemused pack; removing Spinster, who was ponderously unravelling the tangle of the chase, and even hastening Dan, who had just lurched up, a little shaken by an encounter with the doubling hare, which he had declined to pursue by himself. Then, having scurried on for a few fields, they naturally found the hunt over, especially as Miss Puss, after the manner of her kind, had merely turned down

the fence, and darted back to the starting point, where she would have been roused again if the "foot dogs" had been left to themselves. The hour was now two; the clouds darkened the sky; the wind soughed across the bogland, stirring the tussocks, wrinkling the deep brown pools.

"God save ye!" said Cassidy, as he urged the young mare in pursuit of Peter's flying cast.



Dan a little shaken by an encounter with the hare.

"God save ye, larruping on. An' she undher Knock hill again by now, aisy an' cosy."

The "foot dogs," excited by much whip and unwonted bustling, poured on by themselves, a locked gate barring the field's progress. Beauty scurried ahead, grimly determined in his agitated mind to hunt something. An unshackled goat speedily appeased his desire; the pack, nothing loth, taking up the note as the goat fled windlike for its home; Peter, observ-

ing the chase, screaming futile oaths and novel calls over the obstinate padlock.

Now it was at this moment that Mrs. Martin O'Rafferty's new dog (a present from her cousin at Garvagh), a red animal, partly colley, partly terrier, and principally cur dog, heard the yapping noise, and, leaving the shelter of his new doorstep, strolled across the field to see what was the matter. He wandered on to a low bank, and encountered his owner's young goat, fleeing home as one possessed; then, close in its wake there poured upon him a wave of yowling yapping hounds with bristles raised and wild, murderous eyes. Paddy, the dog, was young; he gave a yell, buttoned down his nondescript tail, and fled before them. It was enough. The goat forgotten, the pack flung themselves on his trail, waking the echoes with their bloodthirsty yells. Paddy's powers of thought gave way, he forgot the near haven of Mrs. Martin O'Rafferty's cabin; he remembered the home he had just left and he sped for it; fleeing arrowlike straight across the quiet land, scattering browsing sheep, dashing through herds of cattle, on for Garvagh woods some three miles away.

Peter rose in his stirrups to see a red object careering in front of his hounds. "A fox!" he

shouted, catching the brown mare by the head. "A fox! Come on—it's a hunt, after all!"

They thundered down the field, the mad excitement which the chase of a fox excites coursing in their veins, every face eager now, the horses striding along, the "Tulla foot dogs," holding a field's lead, straining in front.

"God save ye! 'tis a dog," said Cassidy, who had been on the road; he waited long enough to hear some words of wisdom from Mrs. Martin O'Rafferty, and then he urged the young horse on, cheering as he came. Dog or fox, it was a gallop.

The line was a perfect one, the pace just right; they galloped on, over great green banks, safe enough to keep even Arvagh on his legs, over low gaps; grass land light beneath iron hoofs, horses straining at their bits, eager ears cocked for the fences. The south wind came soft in heated faces. The three rode abreast; Carstairs and the whip close behind, though for Carstairs the thrill of the chase never lasted long, the first ditch exciting The Behemoth's desire to be washed. Hounds fled in front, hot on their luckless prey.

"A fox!" cried Peter again, pointing, his eyes alight, his face keen with joy.

"Making for Garvagh," answered Harrison,

looking at the woods in front, then riding straight for a towering bank, greedy for the largest place. It fell to Cassidy's part to trail in their wake, casting bitter abuse on each hound as it fell out—and there were many which abandoned the chase. Dan had sat down some time ago, peacefully gazing into the first wide drain, wondering where he was and how he was to get home. Three couple still gallantly raced their terrified quarry towards his first home, and, terror in his young heart, Mrs. Martin O'Rafferty's dog still sped madly towards Garvagh woods.

Peter sat down, riding with a beaming face; a pack of harriers were not to be despised he thought, as Judy charged lightly on a bank and shot into the field beyond. He turned an anxious head to see Miss Rochfort's Arvagh trying to clear the whole thing, and having put in a lightning kick at the last moment, land with his customary stagger. "I wish—" said Peter, blinking at the sight, and suddenly forgetting the hunt . . .

Garvagh was now close in front; they breasted a steep ascent and were checked by a couple of close hedges, so that as they swung down to the woods, the remnant of the pack had gained a field, and they had to gallop to catch them.

. . . . .

Now it happened that day that a Knockdare fox actually broke, and after a long hunting run the field found themselves, much surprised and elated, close to Garvagh. They came through the woods, to check in the lawn by the lodge, uncertain as to whether their fox had taken refuge on an ivy-grown wall behind some tumbledown buildings, or had gone across the road to try the rocks on the hill.

"Can't be on, I think," said the master, doubtfully watching the hounds spread out puzzled, eager noses to the earth.

He was smiting the thick ivy with his whip, when a sound of uneven distant yapping reached them—hounds, unmistakably. It came nearer—across a low spur of land, which was just high enough to hide the road outside.

"Eh?" said Sir James. "What . . . ?' Then speech left him, for across the spur of land there streamed into view a red dog, half colley, half terrier, and principally cur; his mouth wide, foam on his jaws, terror in his eyes, his tail clamped firmly in. He came as the wind straight upon them, then, seeing the hounds, doubtless imagined that his foes had cut him off, and with a last yell of anguish flung himself on to the low roof, climbing from this to the wall, where he

turned snarling, with a last animal determination to bite ere he died. Hope had left him. Then, over the spur came one and a half couple "foot dogs," headed by Beauty and Dairymaid, giving tongue freely, and close to them, shouting encouragement, hoping they might run into their fox ere he reached the earth, appeared Peter, black with bog mud, Harrison spurring his smoking horse, and Moira Rochfort, her small hands endeavouring to restrain Arvagh. The whip was just behind.

"Well—I'm—blest—" said the master, feeling that his usual language was quite inadequate, "I'm truly—blest—"

The "Tulla baygles" looked at nothing, they dived through their more aristocratic brethren, to fling themselves at the wall, yelling impotently, thirsting to reach their panting prey. And at that moment, Peter, who had been all eyes for his hounds, saw where he had come to. He looked at his pack, he looked back at the stragglers coming yowling across the rise; he looked at the waiting men, he saw Mrs. O'Rafferty's red dog, he caught sight of Lady Rochfort, purple with emotion as she spied her daughter—and the new Master of Harriers wished fervently that the ground might open

and swallow him, down to the peak of his velvet cap, as he saw the eyes of the Master of Fox-hounds fixed on him—and on his kit.

"Good sport?" said the M.F.H. at last, very mildly, and pointing to the panting dog. "Good sport, Reidy? Be Jove! You're dressed for it too."

"I've seen worse gallops," said Peter gravely, recovering himself, and scowling at the grinning fox-hunters. "I assure you, Sir James, that after several turkeys, one had run into and eaten, blackbirds, pigs' food, one hare and one goat, you'd have welcomed a good straight-nosed dog. We did."

"Did you?" said the Master drily. "Did you? I daresay, too, he looked like a fox—in the distance." Here his eyes twinkled. "I'd no idea you were a brother master, but if you'll meet on an off day I'll come out myself with you. I'd like to see that pack hunted."

"Well, I'll let you know when we draw the same way," said Peter, placidly, though still pink in the face. "Hullo! what's that?" There came a rustle in the ivy; Mrs. Martin O'Rafferty's dog was thinking of getting away, the new whip having lashed away his pack. The rustle was followed by a snarl and a gulp, and the hunted

fox popped out of a deep hole, the red dog wailing wildly. All the world appeared to be against him. The fox jumped down, but he was stiff and his moments were few.

"I really believe," remarked Peter, with asperity, to the grinning men he rode among, "that we hunted that fox and you ran the dog from Knockdare."

The idea did not endure long, for as Cassidy, bearing the marks of many falls, appeared on the panting three-year-old, he uttered agonised inquiries to know if the dog was "ate." "For 'twas Mrs. Martin O'Rafferty's new cheep dog," he averred, "an' she below by her dour bawlin' for the life, what harm but the goat to knock her fust of all back into the pigs' pot, no less. If he's ate, sir, a pound won't settle it."

Peter pointed to the wall where the dog still panted. "His wind may be broken," he remarked gloomily, "but the rest of him is there. I wish they'd hunted the man who bred the brute instead."

"God save ye!" said Cassidy piously.

A few days later any man round Ballydane could have a hound for the asking, with a little money thrown in. Peter Reidy had no further use for a pack of harriers. He says they are too

expensive as well as too exciting. Moreover, a week or two later, when Cassidy went to Tulla to see another hurling match, he found that the "Tulla foot dogs" were in full going order, and came home to confide bitterly to Peter that "that schamer Harty niver left the counthry at all, sayin' he had enough money med at home, an' that he had the dogs back an' all no less, huntin' for the life."

Peter said he was more than welcome to them.

## CHAPTER IX

### OF SOME COUSINS AND A QUARREL

"HAVE heard where you are. Would like to come to you for a night. You'll recall James Guinane. Could get in six train. Reply," etc.

Peter, disregarding Cassidy's remark that "the tellygram boy was waitin' on him, an' not too pleased becaise the dogs near ate his legs as he lighted down," read the wire doubtfully. His father and mother were in England; he was alone with Carstairs at Ballydane.

"James Guinane," Peter stroked his chin. "James Guinane. Some clumping countryman, without doubt." A refusal was simple, but Peter felt that he stood in his father's shoes, so he sent a reply to say that he would meet Mr. Guinane at the evening train. He spent an uneasy day, for he had never encountered any of his father's relations and he wondered what the experience would be like. He became still more uneasy

when the evening train bumped into Oonagh, and a third-class carriage disgorged a middle-aged man of the farming class, clad in ready-made tweeds and smoking an aggressive pipe. An inquiry from the stranger for Mr. Reidy left no doubt, and Peter, observing that Mr. Guinane evidently carried his luggage in his hand, declared himself.

"Begonnes," said James Guinane, eyeing Peter in blank astonishment, and speaking with an ill-fitting accent. "You is it, an' Mike away? You? D'ye mean to tell me that ye'r ye'r father's son?"

Peter, assuring him gravely that he had been led to believe so, led his cousin from the platform into the darkness outside, and put cousin and luggage on the front seat of his motor; James Guinane remarking that he was a warm man himself, but never thought he'd sit in one of them horseless cars. He clutched the sides as the car swooped at the dim night, and tore tooting up the wide dirty street. Having regained his nerve, he began to talk.

He came, he told Peter, from the coast side of Galway, but had been to Dublin for a day or two to see to a bit of money, and had heard there of Michael Reidy and his uprise.

They were, it appeared, cousins of the "sisther's brothers" class, and had been friends in distant boyhood. "Whin I made sure 'twas Michael," he went on, "I had to run down, bein' so near." Peter omitted to remark that Galway was considerably nearer. It transpired also that Guinane and his wife were about to journey to America to end their days with a favourite son, so this was his last chance. He looked with open curiosity at the lions crouching by the gates, remarking that they were the queer dogs to have sitting up there; and became clearly ill at ease when the hall door was opened, and a small army of servants ushered them into the old hall, with its oaken walls and wide fireplace.

"Begonnes," he said heavily, laying his luggage on a hall chair, and looking at his boots. "Begonnes, but this is a fine parlour ye have here, an' I'd be obliged for the lend of a pair of slippers. The nails will play smash with ye'r shiny boards."

Peter swept his relative on—hastily—to the smoking room, where, refreshed by whiskey, Mr. Guinane grew happier, though he found occasion to object to the chair-covers. "A bit of American cloth," he assured Peter, was by

far the best for any chairs : always tasty till it cracked, and cleaned with the rub of an old sponge." Little Carstairs sat wide-eyed in his chair, but having a kindly heart, tried to control his face.

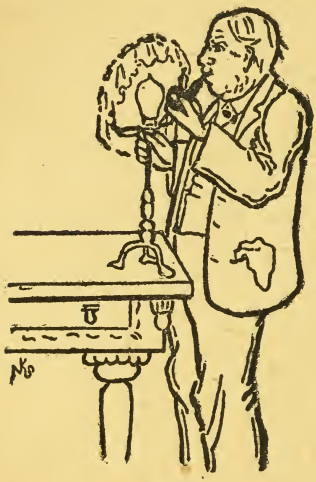
Dinner was a collection of pitfalls. They got a message to say that Mr. Guinane would be there before them, and encountered him plunging cheerfully in, still, of course, in his brown tweeds, to shy visibly at the lighted empty table. "Faith, I see I'm early," he remarked, "but the man here told me the bit was up." He then sat down with resignation, putting his table napkin away with open distrust and stirring his soup doubtfully. "The wife," he told Peter, "sometimes made him a drop of that stuff, when he had a bit of sickness on him an' she could spare an old hen, but 'twas odd ways to take it an' waste fowl for nothing." The soup in question was oxtail, and the taste troubled him. "Meat, no less," he observed audibly, spearing up some. He had sundry altercations with the servants, and evidently thought the changing of forks and knives a hideous waste. "My, my," he observed, as some game reached him, and a footman swept away the fork he had retained, "My, my—

there, young man, take it, if ye want it"—this to the footman. "My, but ye must have a sight of girls below to clean all you'd use here. To think of Mikey owning it all, and you his son!" here he dived into a *soufflée* and announced contritely that "the bit of food was gone to bits under the spoon." Peter endeavoured to give no sign, for, farmer as he was, the distant cousin pleased him; he was so cheery under his difficulties, so full of hearty friendship, so good a soul beneath the appalling tweeds. In fact, when the superior footman choked, he caught Peter's look and fled wildly to the kitchen, announcing to the cook that the young master's eye had him pierced like a gimlet.

Through all his courses and mistakes, James partook lavishly of champagne, evidently regarding it as a mere herald of the whiskey to come. Liqueurs were a mystery to him, and he was with difficulty restrained from filling a tumbler full of chartreuse once he had tasted it. When, after a good deal of whiskey to steady him, they returned to the smoking-room, Mr. Guinane had reached the stage when a man is full of confidence. He sat, this time without apology, on a big chair, and smiled at

the world—a smile which deepened to holy joy as Peter pulled out a pipe.

"I was thirstin' for one,' he announced, "but I was afeard of all the grandeur. I thought maybe ye'd stroll out to the harness-room for a draw with the min"—his accent was failing him —"but I suppose," he added thoughtfully, pulling out a disreputable briar, "ye'r too new for that."



Mr. Guinane pulled softly for a space.

Carstairs coughed apologetically at this, and Mr. Guinane, unaware of offence, fumbled for a match, failed to find it, and, rising, lurched unsteadily towards the electric light, glowing in its bulb. Here he pulled softly for a space, and pulled again, and took out a spill from a vase and held it up, and looked puzzled.

"Pull harder," said Peter gravely.

Mr. Guinane sucked energetically, but finally remarking that "'twas a dead sort of queer light, with a coldness on it," he tried the fire instead, a

reek of shag tobacco filling the room. "I tell ye, ye'r in luck's way here," he said, puffing happily. "Look here, now. I wouldn't put that strip of a carpet on me best bed, 'tis that fine." He poked the hearthrug thoughtfully. "There's a grand quilt at home, ready against one of us would die, but 'tis nothin' to what ye throw on the floors here to be thrampled. If it wasn't for the shlippers ye have me lent"—he waved the smart pumps which perched on his toes—"I'd have to go in me stockin's. An' you're born to it, boy," he added, looking at Peter. "Your fine clothes sit on you as if you were run into them. But I suppose . . ." He then inquired the price of Peter's garments, and arose with shocked solemnity to tell them that his tweeds were "but thirty shillin' made an' all, good enough for any man." Here he revolved slowly to show the inequalities of the tight-trousered suit, and gave Peter the address of the shop where they could be procured.

They talked on pleasantly, for the strange cousin was the best of company, and his potations did not interfere with his flow of conversation. He could hold forth on the wrongs of Ireland with a judgment but slightly biased; could tell old men's tales of the famine times, when men

and women gnawed roots like hungry beasts, and, when these failed, lay down to die with the philosophy of their race and religion. During it all, much whiskey, tempered by a little water, flowed down his throat. Finally he reached the stage when, though he was not in his own opinion drunk (that meant incapability), but had drink taken, he grew sleepy and demanded his bed.

Having quarrelled with the stairs, he lurched into one of the large rooms, and was stricken there with audible desire to take the satin coverlet off and make a cloak of it for Mary Kate, his wife. The fire was out; Peter, seeing it, disturbed its embers angrily. "You'll want something else to drink, too," he said. "Hang these servants! Ring, James; the bell's close to you."

Mr. Guinane, turning, saw the switch of the electric light, and twisted it lustily, swift darkness falling on the room.

"God! God in hivin' this night!" whispered a hoarse, unsteady voice through the gloom. "What kind of place is this? I did but twisht the bell, an' all the little lamps is gone."

"Twist it again," spluttered Peter, overcome at last. "Ring again. It's close to you. We'll get light."

Above fevered mutterings came a match's

splutter, and a small light bit the gloom; holding it near the wall, James Guinane, distinctly shaken by the sudden darkness, found the switch and twisted it once more. The electric light glowed into sudden brilliancy. It was too much for a nearly drunken man; with a skirl of strangled terror, James made for the bed close to him, and leapt for its middle.

"Me God! Me God!" he wailed. "What is it at all? With lights that's no lights below, and ones up here to lep in an' out like throuts at a fly when ye'd ring for a man. D'ye expect me to sleep through it?" he demanded. "Here, for the love of hivin, gorsoon, bring me a candle that'll be quite!" This to Cassidy, who answered Peter's ring, and was confronted by the spectacle of Mr. Guinane crouched on the bed holding the duvet round him, and his young master, overcome with laughter, rocking by the fireplace.

Cassidy's remark, made to himself outside, was to the effect that "he'd niver seen Mister Peter with too much dhrink taken before, though he knew the old man was far gone." Then he retreated for whiskey. When Peter could master his voice to explain the mystery of the light, Guinane, somewhat sobered, descended gingerly from his vantage ground to examine. "Begonnes," he

said ruefully, "I thought the floor would be the next to go, with my head a bit quare be raison of all them unhealthful dhrinks ye had below." Then, fortified by a further libation of whiskey, he was in bed in two seconds, exclaiming a little fretfully at the cool touch of the linen sheets, "for all the world," he said, "like a dip in the say."

But when he came down to breakfast next morning he was glowing with good-humour; so much whiskey had left no headache behind it. "That light of yours is a great invention," he said cheerily. "I woke up thirsty once; ye'r room below was a bit warm, and wanted a dart of light. One turn, an' there was daylight above me head."

Peter thought that his cousin would toy with his breakfast, but he was mistaken. Eggs, bacon, fish, disappeared with lightning rapidity, washed down by a running fire of comment. "I tell you I'd lay out Mary Kate before she'd fry me an egg like that," he said regretfully, as he finished his fourth. "I often gets one, save times"—here he grew pensive—"when she has even numbers for the market an' won't break a tally—small blame to her," with an access of loyalty. He finished with a regretful remark that "he'd like to live like that, but that he missed the bite

of a good cup betune his teeth, and had nearly spilt his tea in consequence."

It was a blustery morning outside, gusts of wind roaring across the land, hustling unwilling clouds. They wandered round the place, looking at cattle and examining land, and Peter felt a strange spasm of regret as he drove his relative to Oonagh. He was sorrier still when the strange cousin wrung his hand at the station and thanked him for his welcome. "There's many a finely brought up young man who'd have shown me me place in yer big house," said Mr. Guinane with gentle insight. "But though maybe ye laughed a bit, 'twas all. Let me know when you marry, Peter, for I'd like to send ye somethin' that'll not disgrace the family." Peter, thanking him, put James into his third-class carriage, and stepped back with some heaviness against the two Ladies Rochfort.

"A friend?" said the old lady, as Guinane leant from the window, his great hand outstretched for a last goodbye.

"A cousin of my father's—and mine," said Peter quietly.

Lady Rochfort's awful profile would have turned weaker men to stone.

"That's right," cackled the Dowager.

"Goodbye, Peter, me boy. Wherever it comes from, there's blood in ye," thundered Mr. Guinane emphatically.

"I am inclined to agree with that," said the Dowager, getting into the train.

The present, which came in due course, was a




Guinane leant from the window, his great hand outstretched.

florid hideousness of silvered plate; but it reposes, a treasured possession, in Peter's dining-room, with "From James" engraved on it. For he was a thundering good fellow, Peter remarks, though he did not understand electric light.

A day or two later his mother came back, and the Ballydane household was swelled by the arrival of a Miss Haldane, a cousin of Mrs. Reidy's, who, fired by dreams of Irish hunting, had taken a dozen riding lessons, bought some tight habits and new saddles, and arrived full of enthusiasm. A few fences, ridden on Mr. Reidy's leisurely weight carriers, were added to the list of lessons, and, as she remained in the saddle, Miss Haldane believed herself capable of following any hunt. She was a big girl, with an unfailing good temper and a great deal of money. Ireland was a huge joke to her, so, if missed, she could generally be safely looked for in the stables or the kitchen, where she spent happy minutes listening to the red-faced cook; but her arrival heralded trouble for Peter.

Peter had not been over-lucky or happy lately. For no apparent reason, Richard Saunders had what Cassidy would have called a "down on him," and there had been certain little encounters out hunting and elsewhere. Condescending kindness pales, and banging a gate in a man's face is rude, even if you do apologise innocently afterwards. These lay with Saunders: Peter was not innocent of soft-voiced inquiries at the end of a hunt as to how Saunders had got over that

bank he didn't like, or coupling a kindly offer of an unimpeachable cigar with a gentle question as to whether he *did* get a man to pull down the stick after all. But any quarrelling is exhausting, especially when there appeared to be no apparent reason.

A week after Miss Haldane's arrival, she bumped forth to a near meet on a cob of Mr. Reidy's, arriving there with very bright eyes, and a stitch in her side. Peter, slightly oppressed by his charge, delivered her over to Carstairs and rode on. "Stick to Car," he said. "I never know where I go to." Miss Haldane practised an ancient trick of bowing nine times to nothing, and in the intervals of this directed Carstairs to go on and she would follow him. Carstairs having mildly suggested that they'd better wait for a fox, the conversation languished.

It was at this moment that Peter rode up to Miss Rochfort—they were schooling into covert—and commenced to abuse her horse. It was the same unruly brute which she had ridden in the dog hunt some weeks before.

"Brute. Brute," said Peter, as Arvagh flew a bank, and landed with a pecking lurch.

Miss Rochfort smiled thoughtfully, pulling her horse up. "As his late owner said," she re-

marked, "whin he do be tired he feel the legs to thim, but he do be fresh to-day."

"Ill-conditioned brute," said Peter; "he's distinctly trying to buck now. I wish you'd change with me."

"Father's best horse," said the girl. "Our hopes of fortune. I assure you, Mr. Reidy, a good deal depends on his horse. If he does well——"

"He's not fit for a lady," said Peter. "When you fall——"

"Just so," broke in Saunders, loud-voiced and confident. "So glad you think so. But hunting's not fit work for a lady. Never meant for any one who can't get up without help when they fall."

Peter muttered something to himself about some people who took jolly good care never to get down.

"What's that?' asked Saunders. "Oh, nothing? Yes, I assure you I don't approve of ladies hunting. My wife," and he let his eye rest on Moira, "shall never hunt."

"Wait till you find her," said Moira Rochfort quickly, but her cheeks were white.

"Oh, I'm content to wait—for a time," said Saunders, and rode away.

"You see," the girl turned to Peter. "Don't

abuse Arvagh. If I sell him—well, it means another year's liberty."

"And if not?" queried Peter, as they rode down to the covert.

She pointed to woods clustered against a distant hill. "Then for me—that," she said, wistfully confidential. "My mother has said it, and you've heard about the hunting—so—" Her voice trailed and died; she was silent, thinking. No gallops across the green country; the cool wind rushing to meet heated faces; no happy sense of fences flung behind, no lift on and off the banks, swift fly across the stone walls, no clever crawl down awkward drops or grunting struggle up steep ascents; no watching of busy hounds, spreading and seeking till one speaks, and then another, and they are off again, fleeting like a pied dream in front. No disappointment of bad days, of empty coverts and chilled ground, driving rain and bitter wind, which make the good ones so happy. No jogging homewards in the dusk, riding every inch of it over again; no shameless hunger for toast and tea when the day is over and the longing for the next day is upon one.

The girl's eyes were dark, her face very quiet for she loved it all dearly.

The covert they now drew lay along the hill-side, gorse bushes, gold-flecked; the spring grew; brambles trailing brown tangles; great boulders, grey and brown, poking up lichen-speckled noses among the bushes. Below stretched field upon field of pasture, fenced by brown banks, straight to Garvagh wood; Garvagh hill, tree-topped, rising like an aggressive plum-pudding from the lowlands. The field stood on the steep slope; horses champing bits, red coats lit by gleam of sun. Hounds drew along, clearly seen in the sparse gorse, now nosing in the undergrowth, now coming out hopeless, to stare at nothing, for the north-west wind swept the hillside, and there was nothing at home.

Men smoked and laughed, feeling there was no business afoot; the country people chattered softly, hoping in vain, inclined to resent the "dogs" which did not find. Moira's eyes were on it all; it was the best part of her life, and it must go. Bad falls, bad horses, lost hunts, had never deterred her. Not far away stood her mother, looking at her angrily, quite implacable as to knowing the millionaire or his son, and descending on her daughter with fearful haughtiness because that self-willed young lady persisted in doing so. Saunders and Doyle were involved

in a loud-voiced argument in which neither thought of listening to the other; O'Grady, a smile somewhere about him, listened. Harrison, big and good to look at, his eyes on the hounds, his heart longing for a gallop, for some big fences to cross. Close to him little Derek Knox, on his thoroughbred, waiting for a start, though there was no hope of any; greedy for place as a child for toffee, fairly certain of it with his roan mare between his knees. When they stopped it was generally on the right side of a fence, and on the ground; he was a man who rode straight to hounds, with none of the anticipation of a fox's line which loses some good men a hunt. The Miss Clancys clacked noisily, surrounded by a soldier or two; their brother rode about on a well-bred bay, good value for the price asked if he had not been a confirmed rearer, only cowed into sullen placidity by Clancy's perfect horsemanship and a daily beating at home. Peter eyed this gentleman a little sourly; there was a certain score concerning a chestnut horse with an over-boiled leg between them.

"Who's that?" asked Miss Rochfort suddenly. "She's with your friend." She indicated a buxom girl with a habit and saddle of impressive newness, and a variety of seats.

"That? Oh, that's Kitty Haldane. My cousin," said Peter. "Come to stay."

"For long?" asked Miss Rochfort.

"For ever, p'raps," said Peter easily. "She loves it."

"Oh," said Miss Rochfort. "She appears," she added considering, "to be—not quite at home," and with a strangely sweet smile she rode away, putting Arvagh recklessly at a nasty drop which he flew at and landed, as usual, on his head.

"Come away," sounded on the horn. A whip at the upper end bleated "get on to him" sadly. They moved on. The wall out of the covert was low, but in some places the drop was deep outside. Miss Haldane followed Carstairs, whose horse topped it; but her fumbling irritated the cob, who charged down, stopped and bucked over, with an airy flourish of his expensive heels. Kitty Haldane lurched, had a passing vision of the world sliding from beneath her, and went over the cob's head, landing with a sounding "plump" in the field outside.

"Begob, he has her knocked," observed a countryman as he caught the horse.

It was Harrison, coming over with a mighty swing, who picked the lady up, and babbled comfort into her ear; but Miss Haldane was too new

to the hunting field to recognise her disgrace. "Big place—took it nastily," said Harrison, in his round voice, as he sprang to the rescue.

"Stupid girl. Fell off," said Miss Haldane, with undimmed good-humour, hobbling along in her habit. "It felt to me as if he went straight up to heaven and then disappeared."

"It wasn't unlike it," said Harrison heartily, as, after three attempts, he landed the girl into her saddle. "Look here, sit back next time," and he took her off, instructing her pleasantly.

"She took a swhoop like a hawk," remarked the man who had caught the cob. "'Tis a fine girl she must be to be up agin wid the sthroke she hit the field."

Miss Rochfort, coming down the hill, saw the accident and laughed. Peter, just behind her, started to the rescue, but pulled up when he saw Harrison, a sudden smile lighting his face.

"She's got lots of money, that girl my cousin," he said thoughtfully. "And she's the best sort in the world."

"I shouldn't have thought that money mattered," observed Miss Rochfort, in a voice savouring of red pepper. "Haldane? Haldane?" the girl wrinkled her forehead. "Not a Haldane?"

"Grey Court, Essex. Were Irish," said Peter. "My mother's cousin married an Englishman. Girl's one of two, simply heaps of money."

"And excellent family; in fact, a very distant connection"—she bit off the "of mine," recognising its awkwardness—said Miss Rochfort icily. "But I still cannot see why the money can matter."

"Oh, but it does," said Peter, looking down the sunlit field. "I tell you it makes me think—What——?" for Miss Rochfort suddenly smote Arvagh on the neck, so that he reared frantically, and then galloped her horse down the steep hill with unmistakable farewell in her small shoulders and averted head.

"Oh, does nothing but snub me now," said Peter with deep gloom, repeating the remark at the end of a disappointing day, as he jogged home gloomily, listening to the merry chatter of the three in front. Miss Kitty Haldane clearly liked Ireland.

## CHAPTER X

### OF A LONG HUNT AND SOME TEA

COLD wind sweeping a bare hillside; hail showers coming swiftly in blinding storms of white, one scarcely gone ere another rushed up; hounds hunting slowly along the heathery hill, as a contemptuous hill fox slipped from shelter to shelter. Men lost interest in the chase; they gathered shivering in elusive corners, with a vague idea that an extra draught through bare branches meant shelter. Then, as the white world cleared, they would gallop across the treacherous hill, slide through boggy gaps, and cower into fresh shelter as a new storm stung them. On a fine day a hill hunt may be bearable, when one can take up a point of vantage in the sunshine and watch hounds work backwards and forwards; but fine days are kept for the sheltered valleys, and the portion of men who brave the hills is invariably wind, hail, and rain.

So the little field drifted from hill to hill,

swearing softly as they went, wishing themselves safe at home again because hunting seemed hopeless and they were weary of it all. A yell and a momentary spurt would rouse unwilling hope; they clattered on, stumbling over hidden boggy pitfalls, slipping on stones, taking an unsafe peaty bank in the midst of a blinding shower; then the hail swept on until it was a veil on distant Burrows hill, and a faint gleam of sunshine lit the dull sky. The wind slipped round towards the west, the intense cold was gone as they left the hill and their third fox to jog on to Firwood. Firwood gorse lies on the bleak hillside, sheltered by towering banks, and beyond it is the wood, which nearly always holds. But the chilled field had grown weary of hope; a find only meant more stumbling on the endless hills, more perishings against the wind's force.

Yet they raised their heads as the first whimper sounded through the gorse; crash went hounds to the note, when old Melody spoke it was time to be there. Sunshine confirmed it stoutly, and the whimper swelled until the gorse rang to it. It surged from side to side, bloodthirsty, musical —a sound to make cold winds and hailstorms things forgotten; then a big ruddy customer slipped over the high bank and went leisurely

across the hill, right among the horses, as one who knew where he was going to and meant to get there. Sorrow was gone for the moment; a fringe of men on foot yelled wildly, gone seemingly mad because a fox was found; the horn rang sharply, and hounds poured out, streaming across the heather, carrying a head with none of the morning's indecision; scent had come with the changing wind. The wise people cantered across the road and took their places high on the slope, for by all the annals of Firwood the fox would either double back or go along the brow of the hill to Dirk, two miles away. Unwise, eager spirits crashed through the heather behind the pack, and stood by the side of the wood.

From the valley below came a faint, unmistakable shout. Now, if hounds turned up the hill they could catch them again, and not regret what was lost; if they were away in the valley, it was another matter. The fence into the wood was a high stone-faced bank, but, muttering something about the valley, Doyle took his horse by the head and went for it, his good bay slipping on the stony top. "Grave outside," he called back cheerily, as men are wont to do when the grave lies behind them.

"He's through, though, and gone down!" he added loudly. Peter, who was riding Judy, got over easily. Miss Rochfort, on her second young one, appeared among the trees—it would not be quite accurate to say that the horse jumped the fence—but it took its tale of empty saddles ere they dashed through, whipped and blinded by young larch boughs, dodging, not always successfully, unyielding stumps; sliding down the steep descent, then a low wall on to the road, and the open country lay in front; so did hounds —they were two fields away, streaking like a flock of pigeons across the valley. Still, it was something to know that they had not come through for nothing. Fences were safe, but the ground deep and sticky; to bustle one's horse meant a certainty of future grief, so the few who had done right rode their chase steadily, hoping for a moment's check to let them up, gaining inch by inch as they went. Across a squelching field, over a low bank, on to sounder pasture; hail showers forgotten now, cold and discomfort dead things coffined and buried.

The wind swept in their faces; hounds were in front; the joy of the swift motion of the eager life straining beneath them stirred hearts with its own power. A moment's check let them

up, but only a moment for them; by the time they reached the busy pack, then they were away again, heading straight for some unknown land, hounds running mute on a breast-high scent, up wind. Harrison's face glowed; his top-hat had taken its usual position on the back of his head; he sang out something as he looked greedily for the biggest place in each fence, swung over a stiff and unnecessary stick, and was perfectly and entirely happy. Little Knox and Dick Doyle wrestled for the lead on the left, riding side by side, Doyle bitterly jealous for the moment, Derek Knox's soul centred in the hounds and quite oblivious as to who was near him. Looking back, they could see the hapless wise people streaming down the hill, plodding in their tracks. Peter's "chape hunter" was, in his opinion, worth two hundred as she strode on, cocking her ears at her fences, kicking narrow banks, changing lightly on broad ones, boring bravely through a thick hedge, bucking a high stick, skimming an open drain. There was nothing like it on this earth, Peter vowed, as they crawled down a nasty drop into a road, where a false step would mean a nasty header. The pace steadied, hounds dwelt for a minute where sheep had foiled the line—a welcome minute for panting horses. Then a

wild yell echoed ahead, and an agitated figure appeared upon a gate to shrill breathlessly that the fox had passed him out some minute before.

"Tired, was he?" said Sir Ralph, dashing forward.

"Tired, was it? Hould on till I open the gate. Divil a tire in him, but going as aisy as a shwimmin' duck, an' headin' sthraight on for Ballyduff."

"By Jove! I wonder how many of us will get there?" said Harrison joyfully, pointing to a dark patch of wood some six miles further on. "Darty's place," he added; "we must have lighted on one of his foxes who's going home."

There it was. Sunshine spoke, by a thorn hedge; they were off again, hounds driving steadily, the country lighter to ride over, the banks big but safe. Good fences for a fresh horse; not so good now, when flanks heaved ominously and necks were white with foam. They ran slowly over some low ground, water squirting beneath the horses' hoofs, and the muddy coats were in the majority. Doyle's bay had turned over at a narrow bank, Judy had been on to her nose, Harrison had accomplished two falls. Miss Rochfort's young one had given up rushing, and was glad to put his feet anywhere.

The stragglers still toiled on far behind—one ponderous figure, seen clearly against a green hill, representing Lady Rochfort, who would never abandon the chase until her horse stopped. A cut-down hedge saw the last of Harrison, who



One ponderous figure representing Lady Rochfort.

lamed his horse badly; an open drain took away two others, and the field thinned down to eight. Judy was chancing her fences, getting on to her banks with a grunt and an effort. "We'll none of us see the end of it," observed Sir Ralph, as

his horse rolled on to a wide bank and jerked itself off it. "I can't let them into the wood, or we shall be there all night."

It was not, however, so easy to prevent them, a coped wall and a locked gate barring their way, so that hounds were into Ballyduff woods before the lock was broken. An open gate let them into the woods. Master and whips dashed on into the dense undergrowth, following the distant sound of hounds; others followed them, but Peter pulled up, Miss Rochfort with him. The sounds died gradually away; they were alone beneath the net of dark branches, a rising cloud darkening the sky. A moment before they had been involved in the rush and hurry of a hunt; now it was silent, lonely, as if no hunt had passed that way.

"It's been lovely, but let's get back; it's over," said Moira in a small, tired voice.

"Do you know the way?" inquired Peter, leading his jaded mare.

Miss Rochfort assured him that she did not even know where they were; a line of distant hills represented Firwood, and Oonagh was somewhere to the left; but otherwise——

They came from the wood's shelter into the cold whip of the wind. Night, the great spider,

flung his grey web across the sky, mouthing the dying day. Away to the west glowed a bar of orange, below a mass of stormy cloud. The horses walked between the dark hedges, their dejected ears flat. No straggler from the chase came up to keep them company; it was all strangely quiet, save for the creaking branches in the big wood.

A hurried inquiry brought little information, but they were directed to "folly on the road" till they reached the house of one Tom Spillane, who apparently was a travelled person and could direct them to Oonagh.

"The babes in the wood," observed Miss Rochfort drearily. She was evidently inclined to blame Peter because they had lost their way, and rested resentful eyes upon him. They came to a network of narrow roads, and were fortunate enough to find Tom Spillane in his cottage. He was a worthy old person who poured directions into bewildered ears: "Oonagh was fourteen mile away. They musht, to get there, howld on to the fust cross, go thin to the left by Mikey Scanlan's, kape on two mile an' go left ag'in an' into Inniskill village, an' thin——"

Peter, his head swimming to the tune of left and right, let that suffice; but he now had to

wait to regale Mr. Spillane with an account of their hunt, given, it is to be feared, in a hasty and exaggerated manner, and leaving that gentleman to imagine that they had run at least twenty miles at top speed.

"An' he to bate ye all at the finish!" said Spillane enthusiastically, as he pocketed Peter's shilling. "Well, good ev'nin' to ye'r honour; 'twill be late ag'in ye see Oonagh."

"It will," said Peter, gathering up his tired mare. As they plodded on it became apparent that Miss Rochfort's horse was very lame indeed, and that Peter's mare had lost two shoes. This was not cheering, and they rode on silently, Peter thinking deeply as he kept Judy back to the young horse's painful limp. If he could have had his way, the shabbily dressed little girl should have ridden three-hundred-guinea horses and denuded London of new habits. But though they were man and woman, Peter Reidy and Moira Rochfort, the gulf between was wide and unfathomable: Peter saw it but too clearly.

"Now," said Moira quietly, as they rounded a sharp curve and dipped towards a network of lights which marked Inniskill—"Now that I've lamed this fellow, there's only Arvagh."

"Ride mine," said Peter quickly.

"You know I cannot," she returned, and Peter frowned, whistled, and suddenly pointed to the forge, where his shout brought a stout red-whiskered man, who examined Judy's worn hoofs and shook his head. He himself was but the smith's brother, and though "he'd do his besht," he thought there was small chance of finding the smith. Having digested this further pie of comfort, and had their horses taken from them, because the smith's brother said "they couldn't mind an ass at Mulligan's, old Mulligan bein' away," they went on to a large slated building with vague hope of getting tea. A smell of porter and many sounds of merriment drifted to them, then, as Peter put his head in demanding tea, a much-befringed young woman, crying "Mother of hivin, fox-hunthers!" charged to their rescue, piloting them down a narrow passage into a small room which smelt strongly of dirt and damp. Peter repeated his request, coupled with a further one for a fire, for Moira shivered. The over-fringed damsel bustled forth, shrieking injunctions concerning kettles to an unseen Janey, to return immediately carrying a pile of wood and turf in her apron. The bog wood flared to the match's touch, and they

gathered near the comforting blaze. The damsel was undoubtedly capable, for a clean cloth was cast on to a big table, covering a large and heavy arrangement which already draped it; this was followed by a steaming brown teapot, large rounds of faintly scorched bread, and a slab of butter. Moira, having tasted the butter, wondered if they had got any jam, and Peter proceeded to thunder the inquiry down the passage.

"Jam, is it?"—he saw their waitress outlined against the bright light in the bar. "Mary Anne, the hunthers want jam." Here she considered, "Mary Anne, ye'll recall the pot of jam that we had to make a dhrink for poor Liza an' she goin' of the decline. Run up let ye, an' see if 'tis in the press above yet."

Miss Rochfort hastily remarked that she did not care for jam after all, but her words were drowned by a high-pitched response from Mary Anne, to say that "Dehlia was dhramin'; didn't she know that Gran had it ate long ago for her tay?—but she'd whip to the shop afore one could wink an eye, an' have it back with her." Hearing this, Moira commenced to drink her tea thirstily — it was fresh and hot — and to chatter of the great gallop they had ridden, when the clatter of horses' hoofs outside took

her to the little hermetically sealed window. "Some one else," she said. It was. A thunderous voice, demanding whether tea could be procured, rolled faintly to them.

Its effect was instantaneous.

"Mother," said Moira Rochfort feebly. "Mother!"

"My—aunt—" gasped Peter, inelegantly and incorrectly.

They crowded together peering out; then, as the stout lady commenced a ponderous descent from her tired steed, Moira grew desperate. She "must hide—fly somewhere; if her mother found her here now after—" (Moira did not quite explain what came after "after") "she would never be forgiven, never hear the last of it—and Dick," . . . the girl flew to the door. Peter cut her off with a swiftly spoken explanation; her mother must see her if she went that way. They looked about them with a desperation worthy of detected criminals. There were no cupboards—no curtains; it was sheer inspiration which brought Peter's eyes down to the heavy cloth beneath the small white one, its folds dipping to the carpet.

"In there," he whispered. "Will you go in there?" he whirled the girl from the door.

Miss Rochfort, muttering feverishly that she would go anywhere, took shelter with the haste of a hunted rabbit; she was too agitated to be reasonable. With equal haste Peter thrust in her tea and plate of bread, murmuring encouraging words as he did so.

"It's all—dusty," muttered a stifled voice as the tea went in. Peter, in an undertone, thought it probable. "And there—are—spiders—" continued a voice which was inclined to be hysterical, while Peter, darting to the door, attracted the befringed handmaiden's attention, a whispered colloquy being followed by a chink of money and stifled giggles.

"She hasn't asked if you're here," breathed Peter to the tablecloth, as he returned and took his seat breathlessly. A heavy footstep heralded her ladyship's approach; she paused and shied visibly when she caught sight of Peter, who was eating with hurried appetite, and answered his over-polite salutation with a strangled snort and a faint movement of her head. Lady Rochfort was followed by the maiden Dehlia, nervously inquiring "if she'd take the taypot, or if it——" here she fell to staring blankly and biting the back of her large hand as a means of checking her laughter.

"Oh, do have some of mine," said Peter politely, raising the brown teapot hospitably.

"'Twould be bether for ye," gulped Dehlia unevenly, "for the kittle is off the bile. G—u—e—" this represented the end of the sentence.

Lady Rochfort, after a second's awful pause, accepted a cup of steaming tea, and asked for more butter and more bread, icily presuming that they could not be off the "bile."

"Surely not," said Dehlia, still staring. "Surely—" Then she apparently solved the mystery. "Oh, glory be to the hivins this night!" she burst out, and vanished in a burst of uncontrollable laughter.

"That young woman," said Lady Rochfort to the tablecloth, "appears to be mad. I see nothing to laugh at."

"Well—neither do—I—see anything—" said Peter gravely, listening with horror to a faint giggle beneath the cloth. He then rose to sweep the hitherto unseen Mary Anne, who had just arrived with the jam, down the passage, handing her over to Dehlia, who rocked in paroxysm by the bar door, murmuring, "Undher the table no less! sorra another shpot. Sorra another tashte or sign of a shpot," and rousing

herself at intervals to repudiate all idea of waiting on would-be drinkers in the bar till "the laughter had left her." Peter then returned to his tea, and to Lady Rochfort, whom he waited on with an attention which nearly drove her mad, and whose one remark was an aggrieved statement—again made to the cloth—that she had been told that a lady answering to the description of her daughter had been seen coming that way—and here she looked suspiciously at Peter, who assured her that it was quite possible, and very nearly strained the situation by adding a remark that he'd heard so himself.

Tea then proceeded, in strained silence, Peter eating steadily with no regard for his digestion, Dehlia coming and going with scorched bread and fresh tea, and never failing to call upon a saint and flee choking as she looked at the drooping cloth. Lady Rochfort finally rose, inclining her portly person to Peter, who bowed her from the room with an over charming grace and a host-like hope that she had liked her tea; a remark which elicited a last flash from the lady's grey eyes, and she departed on her long and lonely ride.

Then, scarlet-faced, dusty, hovering betwixt tears and laughter, Miss Rochfort crawled forth,

a long festoon of cobweb clinging to her hat, to partake of her interrupted tea and inform Peter, several times, that she had never acted so foolishly in her life, and also that he had made her do it; and was only reduced to civility by his rising to take away the cobweb, which swept gracefully down her back, and a remark



Miss Rochfort crawled forth.

that, after all, there had been spiders there. Then, after a shudder or two, Moira fell to laughing softly, at the memory of the tea-party which had passed so close to her.

But there were other things to be thought of. The smith's brother arrived, with the cheery information that "there wasn't a chanst of the

smith comin' home the night, he bein' away wakin' a friend, also that the lady's horse was on the three legs trailing the foremosht one afther her," and the situation became serious. Judy's foot was very much worn; the youngster could never have got home, being dead tired as well as dead lame; there was not a horse or trap in the village. They had come to the stage of staring at each other helplessly as they considered the possibilities of a drive to Oonagh in a donkey-cart, when the noise of wheels at the door roused hope.

By this time the sympathies and attention of the whole village had been aroused; the sound was followed by a surge of informants with the news that one Martin Meagher, who "lived convanient to Oonagh," had been away to bury his cousin and would surely take them home. The car already held four, and the driver, but no one seemed to consider this a difficulty. Martin Meagher, who was pleasantly drunk, assured them he was proud to oblige, and on a faint suggestion as to overloading his steaming mare, said "Divil mind her!" with great heartiness. The smith's brother then repacked the car with considerable tact, placing the three noisily drunken men together, and directing

one, who appeared to be fairly sober but very shy, to mount up with the quality. This he did by taking a precarious seat on the rail and apologising lustily for the largeness of his build. Drunk as they were, they were kindly, one of them taking off an over-odorous coat with a confused suggestion concerning warmth and the lady, and only induced to keep it by Dehlia rushing forth with a large shawl, which she wrapped round Moira hastily.

"An' a happy weddin' to ye," she whispered softly.

"What?" said Moira, bundling with haste on to the car. "What?"—then she grew very thoughtful.

The car lurched on into the soft, cold, dark night, swaying beneath its load, the cart mare plodding slowly, save when a downward slope urged to haste or destruction from the weight behind her. They slipped on, packed closely, for the fairly sober man soon slipped down from the rail, and then went to sleep. They were silent, but from the other side came drifts of noisy and not over moral songs, trilled lustily to the night by the men who were related to the corpse and had owed it to his memory to get very drunk. The old mare knew her own road; she slewed of her

own accord round corners and away from carts, and, in spite of many things, Peter found the drive enjoyable. Different surroundings would have meant decorous distance, not this nearness of a very small figure muffled in an old brown shawl. The strain between them seemed to have broken and slipped away. The night grew darker, great storm clouds spreading blackly; the hills towered above them, desolate and grim; the night wind rustling through the black tangle of the hedges. After a long walk upwards, near Burrows hill, the old mare set off at a merry pace down the steep slope into Oonagh, and all but charged into a dim horse walking wearily.

"Mother!" breathed Moira, terrified.

"Disgraceful!" Lady Rochfort's voice rolled out, drowning a noisy burst of song, and thundering threats concerning police and drunkenness in their wake. For one awed moment the cowering two thought she was about to pursue at a trot so as to ascertain the names of her aggressors, but a surreptitious stroke from Peter's crop hurried the old mare to something resembling a gallop, and the danger was lost in the night, a last echo of "drunken wretches" pursuing them.

Peter had a trap at Oonagh and drove Moira homewards, after a warm parting with Mr. Martin Meagher, who was now supported by his friends, and who was only too anxious to take them on for ever if he could.

They parted at Woodholme gate, Moira unearthing a hand with difficulty.

"It was—a dreadful—adventure," said the girl uncertainly.

Peter, looking down at her in the dusk, said that it was the pleasantest drive he had ever known, and apparently meant it. "There was only one thing we ought to have done," he added, quite forgetting to return Moira her own hand.

"What's that?" said Miss Rochfort, standing still.

"To have offered your mother a lift," said Peter. "She could have sat on the well, and Martin Meagher would have been delighted."

"Well, really!" said Moira, fleeing up the avenue, a singular absence of gravity marking her way.

What puzzled and annoyed Lady Rochfort next day was how she had missed her daughter at Inniskill. Moira had confessed to having left her horse there. "But I took tea there," said her mother. "The Reidy young man was there,

most officious and forward, joking all the time with some half-crazed barmaids, who never stopped giggling, and you——"

"Oh, well—I—I left my horse there—and took a car—home," said Moira, with strict truth.

The word "car" recalled the collision so narrowly avoided under Burrows hill. Having heard herself denounced as one of a parcel of drunken wretches, Moira tried to get away, but her mother had not finished. "I was really afraid you had ridden home with Mr. Reidy," she said. "And I tell you, Moira, there's been quite enough of it. I assure you, if I had found you at table with that young man, I should have been seriously annoyed."

"But—you see—I was not at—table," said Moira, jogging hastily away. She was going to fetch her own horse, afraid to trust the mission to a groom. She met her lame beast half-way to Oonagh, and she also met Peter leading him. Curiously enough, he had not cared to send a groom for the brown mare. Dehlia might have been over-communicative.

## CHAPTER XI

### CONCERNING SKATING AND THE JUMP CALLED HELL

A WEEK later the glass went up and hearts went down; the faint-hearted wind ran northwards, staying there, cold defiance in its breath. The sun sank a globe of fire, and the hills receded to a misty distance. Frost set in viciously; no sparkle of silver on grass and leaf, to melt with a flawing wind and fogging sky to rain, but frost black and solid, roads bound in iron, fields jarring beneath an inquisitive heel. Horses bucked and snorted on straw rides, or trailed panting stable-boys at a rope's end on a ring; hunting clothes went in, and skates came out. After a day or two's hope and fear, the sky grew iron grey, the cold bitter, and the ponds were covered with crowds of energetic sliders. The final epidemic of twelve and sixteen degrees saw Loch Moran frozen across, with a spattering of skaters on its surface.

The lake is of a fair size, hemmed in by craggy hills, two small islands dotted on its grey surface. One side is full of springs, and is unpleasantly deep, so the skaters kept to the shallower end, waiting for a few more nights before they tried the ice beyond the islands. Peter skated well;



Lady Rochfort in pursuit of a friendly chair.

he had learnt abroad, and sped over the smooth ice with the swift ease which is man's nearest approach to flying. The hunting people gathered together, grumbling. Lady Rochfort shuffled with deliberate dignity in pursuit of a friendly chair. Miss Rochfort skated with some ease. Saunders

was full of the many figures which he had once known, and forgotten in the variable climate. Harrison made up in stride what he lacked in knowledge, and piloted Miss Haldane, who possessed neither stride or knowledge. Even the Dowager Lady Rochfort arrived, seated in a long chair with rockers, her slim old form muffled to the eyes in divers furs.

For three days it froze revengefully, froze with a bitter wind and iron snow-filled clouds; the distant hills white, the whole sky moving sullenly. Then the wind flawed southwards; dark cloud battalions slipped away, and there came frost in its perfection, with blue skies and wintry sun. On the second of the sunny days the lake was crowded. Country people slid among the skaters; games of hockey gathered, and several brakes full of people came from Cahirvally to play a hockey match on the ice. Peter, full of desire to practise strange figures, skated off, looking for clear space to whirl on.

"You skate well," said a thin voice. Wheeling, he saw the Dowager close to him, her chair abandoned for the moment. Peter swung with a whirr of biting skates. "Like a push?" he said, and, ere the old lady could reply, he stooped, catching the wooden bar, going swiftly away from

the crowd on to a long stretch of tempting unscarred ice, black and clear before them, his powerful strokes making the first marks, the ice groaning curiously. He paused at last, close to a small island, stiff reeds piercing the rotten ice round the land.

"We are out among the springs, and—I liked that pace," said the old lady thoughtfully; she looked up at Peter, then away to the crowd near shore, where they could see her granddaughter slipping along, Saunders going unevenly beside her; her eyes returned to Peter, slim and erect.

"What a pity!" she said suddenly.

"That I am not a gentleman," finished Peter equably.

The old lady flushed pink. "Especially," she said, accepting the end to her sentence, "as Moira is in the question."

"Seems to me," said Peter, revolving gently, "that I don't look worse than —that."

He indicated Mr. Saunders, who chose that moment to lose his balance and sit down with unwonted rapidity; they were too far off to catch what he said, but Moira left hurriedly.

"The extraordinary part of it is," said the Dowager fiercely, biting off a cackle—"is that

you look like a gentleman, you act like one, you speak like——"

"Perhaps I even am one," said Peter gently, his mouth tight. Then he smiled. "Irish families are strange things. Who knows? My great, great, great grandfather may have been king of Munster."

"Your—several great grandfathers king of Munster?" said the Dowager with hideous emphasis.

"Or it might have been my great, great, great grandmother," said Peter hopefully.

"Your—several great grandmothers—king of Munster?" said the old lady in the same voice.

"Well, no, I suppose it could not have been—not quite that," said Peter.

"But—there are other things," said the old lady. "Your mother, of course, and your own eyebrows." Here she scrutinised Peter with an expression which caused him to grow pink. "I'd like to take you to Rollestown. But it doesn't matter. Whatever you look like, or are, my son's wife will remain implacable, rest assured of that. But I——"

"You understand," said Peter softly, looking at the small, perfect features. "You understand.

You have looked life in the face, and she has bowed, passing it by, under a blue veil of her own weaving. Also, don't be afraid of me. Miss Rochfort keeps me—quite in my place—isn't that the word? But I am glad that you should understand."

Here the Dowager remarked snappily that Peter lacked brains; further, she bade him go away for a time, she wished to be alone. It was warm out there, she would rest. Peter, obedient, his face strangely quiet, skated away, leaving the little muffled figure alone on the steely expanse of frozen water, very still, shading her eyes with jewel-flashing fingers. It was warm, curiously so, the ice sweating clammily; the sky dimming, dulling as a mirror which is breathed on, the reeds by the lake rustling. People spoke of a thaw as Peter dashed back into the crowd; Donovan O'Grady, always pessimistic, remarking that he believed it was thawing on the sly for the last two days, and the whole lake would give way. "These hurly men 'll finish it," he added in his gloomy snarl; for the match players were darting out ungracefully, stooping on their skates, gathering in swaying masses. The ice swayed beneath the onslaught, heaving ominously; then following a ringing report, a great crack sped across the

lake, until the players, startled, scurried shore wards.

O'Grady, spinning actively by Peter, had the satisfaction, ever dear to man, of saying "I told you so." "'Twill go now like a rotten apple; it's a way it's got," he said. "Listen to that again; it's breaking up from the springs by the island. It's never safe out there; the current must run like a stream."

By the island! Peter swung round, looking aghast at a blob against the fringe of trees. "Your grandmother!" he said breathlessly to Moira. "No, wait, I'll go alone—it's less weight." This was to O'Grady, who snarled, keeping would-be helpers back and finding time for a cheerful remark to Saunders that even safe ice would have a mind to go if he started stumbling on it; also that "'twas sure as churches." But his eyes were anxious as he followed Peter's figure, speeding out alone over the smooth ice, and he gave some low-voiced quick orders. He knew the place. The lake was very deep, and by now every one had crowded shorewards. Peter flew like an arrow, crossing the oozing crack, dashing over the smooth ice; the air seemed full of warning, groaning notes, the ice starred rottenly beneath his flying skates. Then he saw that the old lady was not alone; she sat

upright in her chair, her stick across her knees, her eyes flashing, and she faced an agitated ill-tempered countryman, who thundered emphatic threats.

"I tell ye, there'll be a mischief done to ye, me lady," he snarled. "I'm, as ye know, a man of influence, an' there's old scores to pay."

Peter checked himself to listen.

"How dare you take advantage of my being alone out here!" flashed the Dowager.

"Didn't I folly ye out, seeing ye lonesome here?" growled the man.

"Go away!" stormed the old lady. "Go away, James Mulcahir."

"Away, is it? Easy talkin'!" James Mulcahir loosed his bitter tongue, the volume of his words cutting across the still air, as he swore by every god he knew, that "he'd let her honour's ladyship see what'd happen an' she not to listen to him. There'll be a mischief," he thundered; "if I but slhid ye, ye'd go down in the thin ice in there. There'll be a mischief," his stick twisting in his knotted hand.

"There will," said Peter, thinking he was losing time. "A great mischief, you coward. Lady Rochfort, the ice is breaking up and I must take you in at once. There's a great crack as it is, between us and the shore. We must go

very fast to get over it." He looked backwards, and a man running upwards to a house on the hill indicated that some one thought of a very real danger; the flying figure gave ominous hints of ropes or planks. "And you," said Peter to the sullen orator, "clear off. It's rotten as a pear out here, and you're a heavy man without skates. Lame too," he added, as James Mulcahir moved. "Also there's no one about to pull you out."

"Me God!" said Mulcahir hurriedly. "I minds now to quare noises an' I crossin' out."

Peter, moving softly, directed the Dowager to unstrap her rug, and remarked that it was possible there would "be quarer an' he crossin' back."

He moved without ceasing, for the flaw of warmth deepened, long white streaks ran across the sky, and the wind moaned a little.

The Dowager inquired, without any emotion, whether they were likely to get in. She also said she ought to have remembered that it was never safe out here.

Peter thought that by going very fast there would be no danger, but the whole place was going, broken up by the game of hockey. The distant fringe of watchers waved from the shore, shouting foolish directions. "Shlow! Shlow!"

James Mulcahir's face took a puttyish hue; he looked at the wide expanse between hills and shore, at the space of ice to the island, which he knew would not bear—looked with all the terror of a man who has cheated nature, and sees her about to assert herself. He must go slowly with slipping feet. "Shlow!" he wailed. "I'm an ould man an' lame. How will I rache the land? I'll drown!" he cried, with full horror of unanointed death. He eyed the chair—those long runners would slide swiftly into safety. "Down to hell itself the lake goes!" he wailed, and with a sudden stagger he cast himself on the Dowager's feet, clasping her with terrified arms, the ice groaning grim prophecy. Then he swore by saints innumerable that, once off the lake, he would sign peace with her ladyship. He clung and swore; there seemed no hope of removing him, his voice and the Dowager's clashing in a war of words, until, darting swiftly, Peter caught them and swept the combatants across the ice, quite unheeding the Dowager's high toned order that she preferred to drown rather than arrive in this undignified manner. The ice heaved beneath the weight, which came and went ere it had time to break; they crossed the starred hockey-ground, sped over the clammy crack—Mr. Mulcahir praying, the Dowager sitting very

upright, sniffing at her salts bottle. As they neared land, Peter stumbled across a fallen hockey-stick, so that the released chair sped madly landwards, squishing through the reeds to strike shore with a hideous shock and entangle Mr. Mulcahir and the Dowager in a still closer embrace.



Mr. Mulcahir and the Dowager.

"I had to—bring both," gasped Peter as he struggled to his feet.

"Take it away," said the Dowager faintly. "Its clothes—are not pleasant."

They unhooked the praying man, shook up the squashed old lady and endeavoured not to laugh.

"Aren't you ashamed of yourself, James Mulcahir?" piped the Dowager, rising furiously.

"I am that same, me lady," said Mulcahir meekly.

"Then go home and go on with it," said the old lady. "Go home! I have never been made —so—" she looked at the faces round her, at her daughter-in-law who was stricken dumb with horror, at Saunders glaring at Peter.

Then high above the other voices came Cassidy's tones. "Begob! wasn't it the fine ride Jimmy had, cosy in her ladyship's lap," he said, "with the ice heavin' for all the world like a shook carpet! An' they so bitther agin each other. Oh be dam to thim spirity stoves to make tay with."

"Never—" said the old lady; then she paused, to break suddenly into her shrill cackle until it echoed all round her, Cassidy bending undisturbed over the spirit stove.

"An' I say, be damn to shkeetin'," muttered Mr. Mulcahir, turning his shaken humbugged self for home. "Had I to threaten her on the land, I needn't be rethreatin' me word to thim that wants it."

Lady Rochfort, drinking her tea gloomily, remarked that Mr. Reidy seemed to find a pleasure in making them all ridiculous. Saunders commenced to speak some supercilious words of advice

concerning islands, currents, and the absurdity of bringing over Mr. Mulcahir like that, and was checked by Peter inquiring, with meek voice and ominous eyes, whether it would have been better to push the man off and go through the ice. At this point he went away, to be presently followed, timidly, by Moira, who wheeled and left again, nose in air, for no apparent reason. There was nothing to annoy her, except that Harrison and Miss Haldane were fussing over Peter, the latter handing him tea and assuring him of her unstinted admiration for his prowess. Peter put down the tea, watching a haughty, retreating little form with thoughtful eyes; he could have borne with a "thank you." Old Lady Rochfort put her thin fingers into his as they parted. "Good night," she said; "thank you for bringing me in, and remember—I understand." Her old face was strangely sad.

The thaw proved real; the dulled sky darkened, the clouds swooping back, rain fell in torrents, until falling water and melted ice made the country almost unridable. There was still a bone on the north side of their banks, and an unpleasant want of grip on the sides when hounds came out.

It was a fine day, a repentant wind blowing softly from the clouded west, a damp world weep-

ing over its freak of frost and snow. Peter went down in his motor, they were out in the lighter country, fenced by stone walls and less dangerous.

As he slid through a film of muddy water, where the road was under water, he saw the train pulled up on his right, the line flooded, and a distressed engine-driver glaring down the watery expanse. Agitated top-hats appeared at several of the windows. The guard, perched on the vantage ground of a high rock, was urging a workman, Mickey by name, to "gallop up an' down a bit an' see if they could scrape through." Mickey, after some urging, took the flood gingerly, his gallop a very slow walk; having disappeared to his knees and no further, he returned like a new dove to the steam ark, to announce they could make the station if they walked it, that was "if there was ne'er a hole tore up be the wather." Being urged to gallop still further, he sourly remarked "he'd be damned if he did; let the gyard go himself," and returned to his work of scratching at the line. Peter by this time had taken two anxious sportsmen on board—one, of course, Doyle, who took a header through the window, and got very wet as he joined them. The car was somewhat full. Then they proceeded by the nervous train, which took the water most

reluctantly, and crawled into Granagh station with the aspect of a ducked cat.

There were pools in every field; horses fresh from their rest squealed and kicked wildly, going with uneasy rounded backs and ever-ready heels. Miss Rochfort, who had arrived by train, dropped with great difficulty on to Arvagh, to be immediately involved in a whirl of bucks and plunges, during which she hooked her knees round her pommels and fought for the colt's head. Having at length got it up, she forced him off the road, and hurried him round and round a ploughed field, the water squirting from the furrows as she galloped.

"Brute," said Peter, looking at horse and girl. "Brute! Absolutely unfit for you," and he joined the girl in the plough. "I suppose," he said dubiously, "there'd be the dickens—I mean nothing would—Couldn't you change with me? I'm on Judy."

"Oh, thank you," said Miss Rochfort, in her new icy manner, "I can ride my own horses."

"And break your own neck," observed Peter gloomily.

Here Miss Rochfort, making some confused remark, directed to Arvagh's mane, concerning the fact that her neck was completely her own to break, moved towards the road and pulled up

again. "I see your—cousin is promoted to one of your horses," she observed.

"She's to follow Harrison to-day," said Peter. "I tell you she's a ripper, that girl," he added, with a sudden smile on his face as he looked at the road. "She simply loves Ireland—just listen to her asking idiotic questions about the hunting! And heaps of money too, all her own."

"I cannot see," said Miss Rochfort, who had grown very upright, "why the money matters." She rode away; her great bay going with ears laid back, and tail tucked into his strong quarters.

They splashed across the fields, sullen pools lying in the hollows, the ditches brimming, to draw a wide gorse, stretching along a craggy rise. Some miles away ran the Cahir, wide and muddy; a great ribbon of turbid water winding between ochre-hued flats. The sky was pallid blue, flanked by rain-laden clouds stealing up from the river; the hills lost in a haze of gold, where rain and sun met. The field waited impatiently, hope growing dim. Now and again came an unbusiness-like, jubilant squeak from the gorse, followed by the rating, angry voices of the whips; Miss Haldane bouncing in her saddle at each squeak, and earnestly entreating to be shown the fox. There was nothing at home, so they moved to a wood

about a mile away, crossing the light poor land, with its crop of crags breaking through the surface; fresh horses stumbling over the jutting rocks, flying the stone walls wildly. Peter kept the tail of an anxious eye on a big bay horse and a very small girl, watching their unruly flight at each obstacle; still, loose walls are fairly safe to a bold horse, and he comforted himself; unless they got into the crags and the mad youngster slipped on a stretch of stones, Miss Rochfort was not likely to come down. It was a perfect country all round; a line of grass and flying fences.

Hounds dashed into the wood; then came a note—no squeak this time, but the true note of an old hound who knows he has found his prey. It rose, the pack flying to it, and was confirmed till the wood rang again, and, finding it too hot to hold him, a big ruddy fox popped quietly out, stealing across the lawn beyond. Hounds poured out like a wave, settling to it with a burst of music, then away mute and fleet, racing across the green field. The wise men, who knew the little gorse cover which a Cartown fox generally makes for, galloped hotly to the left, waiting on the road, watching the fox cross. Hounds dwelt there for a moment; then Fancy spoke, and they were away again, pouring down towards a wide bank

half covered with straggling thorns, the line of walls lying beyond. Miss Rochfort's Arvagh charged the bank with terrific energy, thudded in among the thickest of the thorns, to swoop with a plunging bound over the ditch beyond; then there was a line of flying walls and sound grass to gallop over. Arvagh's manner of jumping was to rise some ten feet from the fence, and either clear or hit it, according to the length of his jump.

So far, it looked like an ordinary run into Killeen, but it was not so. The big fox turned, making for his native hills some four miles away; the line taking them across low-lying fields fenced by high banks, greasy now from the frost. Peter saw Arvagh vanishing in a manner horrible to see over the first of these, slipping and staggering as he landed; he was clearly quite out of his rider's hand, and was going as he chose. Occasional yells told them their fox was far in front. For some time it was fair going, then the hill-fox found his home, and they toiled up a steep ascent, where the peaty banks, melting at a horse touch, were fastened together with straggling bushes, and possessed yawning graves at one or both sides. To take these uphill, out of ground like melted asphalt, was not easy; the tale of empty saddles grew. Miss Haldane charged them in Harrison's

wake with the pure joy of inexperience, landing with struggles which she quite believed to be part of the programme.

Hounds drove on steadily, hunting alone, no one able to keep near them. The field toiled after; they topped one hill, and slid down it, coming down at the high banks with hideous visions of what lay outside; then they turned, skirting another ascent, horses toiling and sobbing, grunting as they tried to jump. Peter got off, running by Judy's side; Carstairs and The Behemoth came to a stand half-way up, the great horse quite beaten, and even Arvagh became ridable, nothing but his rider's light weight and his own breeding having saved him from a dozen falls. Peter and Moira were riding very much to the left, led by a man on an unclipped grey who had been going gallantly throughout, his unkempt mount taking the rotten fences with wonderful cleverness, standing until his particular piece of bank crumbled down into solidity, then jumping out. The yap of hounds came to them, but they were alone, the rest of the field having chosen the easier climb to the right.

"Take care," urged Peter, as Arvagh with a rocketing spring, flew a deep drop. "Go easy. I think there's something big in front."

A gorse-grown brambly bank nosed across the sky-line; the snow still lay thickly on the high ground they rode over, and they could see hounds racing up a further slope. The man on the grey, after a pause, rode gingerly at the fence, poised on its top, muttering, and disappeared from view. Arvagh plunged, ever ready to follow.

"What's outside?" demanded Miss Rochfort, craning her neck to see across the high fringe of gorse and bramble. "What's outside?" she demanded again, tightening her reins. A faint sound of shuffling answered her.

"It must be a big drop," she said impatiently. "Oh, I say, you there, what is outside? I want to know."

A dishevelled capless head appeared above the brambles, heralded by hands clinging to the tussocks as the owner climbed from unknown depths.

"Outside, is it?" The head came higher. "Hell, ma'am, hell," said the man solemnly, gaining foothold, and leaping for an unseen far side.

"Dear me," said Miss Rochfort weakly.

Peter suggested thoughtfully that it might be as well to try elsewhere. The grey horse, festooned with brambles and extremely wet, now

appeared going up the field beyond, his owner's cap gone for ever. They tried along the fence, until Peter found one spot where a clever horse could scramble on to the bank without jumping; Peter took Judy at it, she climbed willingly, then, after a snorting examination of the black depths outside, decided on her inability to clear it, so slid slowly into Hell, scrambling with goat-like activity up a sloping piece of the bank outside—Peter, as he stroked her neck, deciding once again that his "chape sort of hunther" was a thing unequalled.

"Come slow," he cried to Miss Rochfort. "Hold him, make him walk. Oh——!"

For Arvagh had recovered his wind and his temper; he reared angrily, raked his head away, and rushed at the bank with a steep upward sail; saw the black chasm outside almost too late, but with a twist of his active quarters, kicked back and all but cleared it. But not quite. His hind-legs slipped sharply into the fringe of brambles; he lurched, and lurched again, falling over on his side, and lying strangely still.

"Damn brute—I beg your pardon," said Peter, tweaking Moira to her feet. "Get up, you!" he pulled the bridle, but the bay horse did not answer—he quivered feebly and lay, his hind-legs

trailing through the brambles into Hell's depths, his eyes glazing. His body stirred with a deep-drawn breath, and Peter looked and knew. He pulled the bridle, knowing its uselessness, for the bay horse was dead.

Miss Rochfort flung herself down by its side. "He's not—oh he's not—his back's broken," she said slowly. "Oh! Arvagh—and you were my last hope."

"But it doesn't matter"—Peter, cursing himself as the king of fools, shot to his feet—"because he's mine. I bought him this morning in the ploughed field."

"For — how much?" said Miss Rochfort, her white face strangely shrewd.

"For—for—" Peter's brains struggled—"for three hundred."

"We never expected more than two," said the girl quietly. "But—it's good of you. Poor horse! he did his best."

The horse lay still, his race on earth over; his mad rush at the fences he loved to fly, his happy buck and fling gone for ever. The girl stood, dry-eyed, looking down at him. They were very poor, and she had bargained for a year's further freedom if she sold this youngster well. A year is so much when one is so young.

"But he was mine," said Peter hopelessly.

"But he was not," said the girl, her voice unencouraging.

"What now?" Peter was struggling with her saddle, pulling it with difficulty from the dead horse's back, and slinging the foam-flecked bridle across his shoulder. "I've got a second horse. You shall ride Judy," he said, and his voice also did not admit of further argument.

There was nothing to do but go, leaving Arvagh, still for ever, by the tangle of brambles in the treacherous fence; turning sad heads again to see the bay smudge by the dark mass of briars. Moira's eyes were wet as she put Judy at a drop into a narrow lane, which the mare topped and slid over cleverly. They stood then, high on a hillside, to watch the hunt pour on. Hounds flashed into view on the snow, no one with them —busy little specks. Now a few men came up to them and were left behind again, as the mountain fox circled round his hills. Far back, climbing dots of red and brown, came the late division, crawling hopefully on; a hunt was a hunt to them, no matter where the hounds were. Now the snow was left behind, and hounds were clear on a black, heather-clad hillside; circling sheep foiled the line, and they could see the pack

spread out at fault, and draw together again, making for the flat land under the hill. Running by Judy's side, Peter hurried to the road below, where he found his waiting horse; but the fox was too much for them, and was far ahead; scent grew fitful until it almost failed,



Moira Rochfort sat very silent.

and though they hit it off here and there, the hunt was over.

Moira Rochfort sat very silent as the flood of sympathy poured over her; she rode by Peter. Saunders, looking not ill-pleased, came up loud-voiced, hotly insisting on a further change of horses, that she must take his grey; but Moira, quietly insistent, said she would stay as

she was. Lady Rochfort forbore to argue, perhaps sorry for the quiet white face. She even appeared in a new rôle, and checked Saunders as he urged the change arrogantly, with distinct disparagement for Peter's mare. Peter said nothing, but as Saunders insisted, he called his groom, who had found refuge in a trap, and told him, if Miss Rochfort wished to change, to take Judy straight home.

"Oh, she'd better change," said Saunders. "But if you do that, what am I to do?"

"That I could not say," answered Peter, under ominous brows.

Mr. Saunders remounted his grey swiftly, and Miss Rochfort mustered a faint smile.

They jogged on to Killeen gorse, close by the fussing Dun river. Most horses had more than enough, but there was more to come—a burst out across the best of the stone-wall country; wall after wall flung behind by the leaders, squashed into noisy little grey gaps by the sheep-like tail, who choose no place for themselves; stones ringing under the tap of clever hoofs, lying far beneath bold ones. They swung by the Deen river, flying along the banks, silver spray beneath their feet, open ditches to jump, then back on to high ground again, and with a wide

ring back to covert to lose their fox in a rabbit-hole after a brilliant twenty-five minutes, with hounds never touched throughout.

A long ride lay before them, for they did not go back by train. Judy had gone perfectly, and Miss Rochfort thanked Peter with a faint smile when they reached a village where they could have tea, and he lifted her down.

"I liked it so much—if it was not for poor Arvagh, out alone there," she said, her lips quivering; and Peter swore softly.

They filled the little room; a crowd of hungry fox-hunters, eating great rounds of buttered toast, drinking uncountable cups of tea. But they were not a merry party. Moira, very pale and still, looked at her toast and drank feverishly. Lady Rochfort, very large and impressive, quarrelled feebly with little Carstairs, who would press food upon the unwilling lady. Finally she created a diversion when she demanded her reckoning from the shy girl who waited on them, and who asked, "An' what did ye use, me lady?" diffidently.

"I have had," said Lady Rochfort sternly, "a man's dinner, a horse's drink, and two teas."

"Dear me," said little Carstairs, surveying her with weak admiration, while Peter's cousin

giggled audibly, and the shy girl murmured "Three shillin'." Her ladyship, muttering something concerning ill-timed humour, stalked from the room.

It was a very long jog homewards. Peter found himself riding with Miss Rochfort, even her mother refraining from open rudeness to the owner of her daughter's mount.

They did not talk much; the girl was gloomy, inclined to revert to her morning's coolness of manner. Rain pools filled the hollows, giving back grey distorted visions of the world above them. Wind-whipped floods ran across the low-lying fields, lapping the rises hungrily; laden clouds rode stormily, travelling hurriedly across a further grey dimness; the sun slipped to rest, smothered behind the mass, a faint gleam of saffron marking his track. Saunders, always loud-voiced, offended the evening stillness ahead; his over-loose breeches flapping, his arms wide, his hat tilted backwards over his long hair. Sometimes he looked over his shoulder, and seeing the two coming silently, looked away again, satisfied. The grey-fenced lonely country drifted by and was gone, until they rode again between green-banked fields, and saw Oonagh woods ahead. Then Peter spoke.

"So—it's to be that?" he said, and pointed ahead.

"Yes," said Miss Rochfort icily.

"That," said Peter, smiting his horse's neck softly. "And—you."

At that moment a gust whipped Saunders' clothes into more aggressive bagginess, his bridle arm worked wildly, his voice rose. Miss Rochfort grew whiter. "I should call you impertinent," she said—"but——"

"But you won't," interrupted Peter quietly. "I assure you I should resent it. But never mind. Remember one thing"—he bent nearer to her: "No matter who I am, I am always here."

From behind drifted merry voices; Kitty Haldane's high above the rest, telling something which concerned "Peter."

"I am scarcely likely to forget it," said Miss Rochfort, with steady bitterness. She looked over her shoulder at the group behind. Carstairs' high-voiced account of how The Behemoth, worsted by size, put his shoulder to one wall, and laid its ruins flat upon the field, now drowning the rest.

"But you should see Peter riding them," chanted Miss Haldane. "He . . "

"Oh, good-night," said Moira, pulling up Judy. "I really cannot see—now, why— Good-night."

"I must tender you my thanks, Mr.—er—Reidy," rumbled Lady Rochfort in her deep base, endeavouring to speak civilly and to feign forgetfulness of Peter's name.

"And mine," said Saunders. "Quite kind of you, Reidy, really."

"I assure you," said Peter with dangerous politeness, "that you have nothing to thank me for. Good-night."

He turned quickly away to ride on alone in the dusk, but, with a sudden movement, Moira slipped from Judy's back, and, running along the road, put the reins into Peter's hand. "I'll walk up," she said; "and—for me—there is something to thank you for. Good-night."

She hobbled away in her tight habit, and, as she went up the avenue, her skirt lapped about her knees; there were only the drowsy birds and the evening wind to see that she was crying bitterly.

## CHAPTER XII

### HOW A DEBT WAS PAID

THE Mountain Daisy was some of the four-legged flotsam and jetsam which a willing wave of owners had laid on the shores of the stables at Ballydane. She was an overgrown, rather lumpy thoroughbred, with great galloping quarters and a light girth, and she had been brought down for sale by a tall, red-whiskered person who did a little racing, but had found the Daisy too slow to suit him. This, however, he kept to himself. In fact, one might have thought, listening to the sale, that he was parting with his heart's desire solely to oblige the Reidy family, and that they might, if they wished, possess a mare which could, "if stretched," show her heels to anything in the county. It was true that later on the Daisy constantly showed her heels, but not quite in the light intended; she drifted into company with the Clancy chestnut and the brown mare Judy, and she failed most signally

to give satisfaction. Why her absurd name which had no bearing on her breeding, stuck to her was a stable mystery, but it did—sometimes abbreviated to the Daisy, but generally given in full.

She had been described as a finished hunter that "would lep what'd come to her," but this lacked accuracy, for when Peter took her out, though she looked extremely well, her light ribs concealed by his long coat, she regarded hounds with an interest which did not point to much previous hunting; she "showed her heels" to everything with vicious precision and a desire to hurt, and her aristocratic nose was generally at an unpleasant elevation. Also, her jumping was a series of surprises; she would take stone walls with a mighty bound, or gallop through them without making the faintest effort to rise; would jump banks with so much energy that she invariably landed in the far ditch, when there was one, or, in default, lay a defiant head upon them and pluck out grass in mouthfuls, responding to whip and spur with sullen star-aimed kicks. Altogether there were pleasanter animals to ride to hounds, and it was sore necessity and several lame horses which saw Peter on her back one day near Christmas, with a good bank country all round.

The first covert they drew was some distance from the road, and, as they galloped down to it, the Mountain Daisy chose to tuck her long legs beneath her and fly like the wind past young Clancy, who was cantering quietly; Peter cursing as he went, and endeavouring, vainly, to get the mare's head down. Tommy Clancy had several ambitions in life; but one, which outweighed all the others, was the desire to win hunt races and absorb hunt cups. At this moment he happened to be deep in a gloomy calculation of his year's hopes, which were very small, for his best horse was laid up with a bad back tendon, "hanging off it in strips," as he put it himself, and he had no second string. Just then his clever little eyes fell upon the Daisy as she shot past him; he was quick to note her taking action and well-bred look. With a light-coloured cigar in the corner of his mouth, he presently sidled up to Peter to question him about his mount.

"Biggest brute I ever rode!" said Peter, with emphasis, endeavouring to moderate the Daisy's ardour as she dashed at a stone gap, scattering stones about the field and knocking away Miss Martin's horse, the charge eliciting high-pitched remonstrance from the injured lady.

"Is she a brute, now?" said young Clancy

woodenly, coming through the gap. "Is she that, now? P'r'aps you'll part with her?"

"Oh, perhaps," observed Peter. "Per—haps," beating the Daisy with ardour as they cantered at another wall.

Now, the chestnut horse which Mr. Clancy had sold to Peter had not been a success, and its purchase had rankled sorely. It had come out once or twice, but after that, Peter, waxing despairingly witty, had declared that it wore out his mother's kettles, and sold his expensive buy for twenty pounds to wheel a hansom about London. This sale had been veiled in secrecy, and inquiries from the late owner as to the chestnut's whereabouts were always met with a suave return as to a bad cold and some hopes for the following week. Peter had endured so much condolence when he had appeared on the said horse, that he endeavoured to conceal his folly. His eyes lit a little, not over-pleasantly, as young Clancy spoke to him, but he was outwardly polite. Clancy, in the meantime, began to think deeply; he rode behind Peter, watching the Mountain Daisy rocket over a low wall with the swiftness of a startled pheasant and, putting her aristocratic nose high, turn round and kick a gap in the next one with bewildering

activity. But the mare's breeding magnetised him, and he knew what wonders his consummate horsemanship could work. Once in his possession and trained by his methods, he felt sure the cup would pass to the family sideboard.

They found at Kilcooly wood, and endured a weary, jerky hunt, hounds alternately racing and crawling, just the sort of thing to try an irritable horse's temper. It certainly tried Peter's; his cheek was flushed and his right arm weary as they ran slowly to Moylish Hill. Had he been on Judy, he might have enjoyed seeing a fox perfectly hunted, little Sir Ralph seeming to cast with a foreknowledge of the line; but the Mountain Daisy kept all attention focussed on herself. She scurried with unabated ardour across the flat, chumping with relish mouthfuls of grass plucked from the last bank she had laid her head on; now, urged by stick and voice, she bucked high across a stone wall, hit a stick with every leg, and, flying from the subsequent thrashing, fled wildly, making for the next fence with as much enthusiasm as if it were her evening feed of oats. It happened to be a most uncompromising bank, one of those fences which appear to have a razor top, until, as you rise, you see a solid width of bank and ditch beyond. The Daisy, thundering

at it airily, made up her mind to fly, rose with this idea, saw her mistake, tried to kick back, muddled the effort, and balanced on her head in the far field. Peter arose, sullen-faced, holding on to the reins and not far from the idea of administering another chastisement, from the ground; but the mare, who was up in a second, held other views, and backed rapidly. For some seconds they revolved, Peter threatening volubly, the Mountain Daisy evading, until young Clancy, who had never been far off, came to the rescue, and the Daisy, recognising defeat, stood still and shivered.

"I'd sell the brute for a piece of old iron!" said Peter, diving for his stirrup hurriedly, for hounds were on. "Upon my word, I believe she enjoys a fall."

"Oh, she'll learn in time," observed young Clancy, watching the thoroughbred stride on—"though she'll be apt to kill you first," he added thoughtfully, remembering his desire to purchase; a desire which deepened as he noted the mare's stealing stride.

Peter muttered something as to its being probable, and swung aside for a gate with unwonted caution. After a few more fields, they marked their fox to ground at Moylish, and

departed to try Ballyleen, a small gorse lying close to Ballydane itself. They jogged up to it hopefully, looking at the little patch of green set in the brown-hued, coarse grass bog. The covert keeper, full of restless hope, met them, announcing softly that "himself was surely widin; wasn't he waitin' the last time, an' they pasht the covert out without comin' in? But to-day he must be there." Yet not a note, not a whimper rose from the gorse, until at last, urged by the insistent keeper, whose ten shillings was before his eyes, and who declared "'twas a mather of no smell," the little master plunged on foot into the prickly depths, and clove his way, a little bright-plumaged bird, through its depths.

Then, just as cigarettes were lighted and growling had commenced, piercing yells rent the air, the whip's cap shot skywards, and further roars from excited watchers denoted that a fox was found and away. Hounds came out, feathering uncertainly on the cold, boggy land, until the field humped chilled backs, looking for a repetition of the morning's disappointments. But once on the green beyond the bog, everything changed; there was no want of scent here. They streaked out now: now old Melody had it, now Fantasy wrested the lead, every hound on the

line shrieking melodiously that they could hunt this fox. No humped backs now; a thrill of joy such as only fox-hunting can bring, bridles shortened for a flying start; down at a nasty gorse-grown fence, on and off a sound bank, the pack flying in front; in and out of the road, where a crowd huddled and bumped at an iron gate-way, swearing and backing and pushing as men at a gate are wont to do. Little Derek Knox had sailed across a great banked-up mass of bushes beside it ere the first man had squeezed through. Others followed him, with set faces and eager hearts, undimmed by any wise axioms concerning the needlessness of haste, for Ballydane gorse was but two miles away, and they must check there. Wise men may eventually finish more runs, but they miss the keenness which only sees hounds hunting ahead, and means to be with them as long as their horse can face its fences.

Now, Peter had changed horses before they came to Ballyleen; he was now riding Dawn, a clever roan, but having put the boy on the Daisy, he thought a little more hunting would be distinctly good for her, and directed the willing youth to follow him. As hounds streaked away he had swung left, so as to keep the Daisy out of the crush, and found himself, after a couple of

stone walls, which he heard the mare squandering and scattering behind him, coming down at a high, narrow bank, sloping from him and with no ditch to induce a good take-off. He knew it was just the kind of thing which the mare might try to fly and then fall over, so, having slithered over himself (there was a very wide ditch beyond), he turned in the saddle to see the thoroughbred's performance. The boy sat down, smiling, to her rush; her nose was flung skyward, so she meant jumping; she rose with a bucking lurch, treating the bank as a wall, saw the ditch, and lurched again. Peter pulled up to see her over.

Meantime the hunt had run straight for Ballydane, swinging there at top pace across the holding fields, with the prospect of putting their fox through and getting away into the best of countries beyond. But they reckoned without old Gleeson's offended majesty; they had twice omitted to draw his covert, and he had sworn revenge. Hounds poured in over a low bank, and some two minutes later the master, with a purple face, came thudding round the gorse.

"Oh, take it easy! Take it easy!" he said. "He's to ground in covert." He then looked round, demanding old Gleeson, who appeared

with a look of much innocence and a sworn alibi, observing firmly that "God's hand might be in it, but not his" : and Sir James, recognising the hopelessness of the contest, promptly fell upon the unoffending Mr. Reidy, who came up, very much blown, on one of the weight-carrying cobs, to sit aghast as man after man abused him. It was Moira Rochfort who finally came to the rescue.

"It's your own fault," she observed fearlessly to the thundercloud in a peaked cap which represented the master. "You passed the place twice lately, and the old man said he'd be even with the hunt. You *know* it's no use saying anything to him."

Sir James abandoned the rôle of avenging angel and became human. His nose went up and his mouth broadened.

"Begad, you're right, Moira!" he said, commencing to blow his hounds out.

At this moment, Peter, riding very fast, imagining that hounds would be away again before he got to them, came battering up the field, passing close to a fringe of waiting grooms who had dashed out to see the chase. Peter flew over a large stick which he might have avoided, and, as he pulled up the panting roan, was confronted by Magee, who slid an aggrieved hand on the horse's wet neck.

If Peter had expected praise for his stick jumping he was mistaken. "Ye haven't a sthim of sinse, Masther Peter," said the head groom severely; "knockin' the sowl out of your horse an' the fox to earth in the covert before ye."

"But—I didn't know that," said Peter meekly, always abashed by the head groom's superiority.

"Had ye looked," said Magee, walking round Dawn and searching for imaginary thorns, "ye might have seen Mr. Doyle standing aisy, and that should have been enough for ye."

"Dear me," said Peter softly, refraining to explain that Mr. Doyle's form was not always visible at a distance of over a mile.—"Dear me, what a pity the Clares ever lost their money." He then looked at Magee sadly, while the battle raged round the covert side, and to him came young Clancy patting his grey mare, his expression dangerously innocent.

"So you changed," he said.

"Yes," said Peter grimly, "a good thing too—" Here he paused and thought. "I never rode such a brute. Tell you, she's to be had for the asking."

Young Clancy, swimming leisurely round the truth, then proceeded to break into a tale of a friend of his who wanted a horse of the class to ride about London—Peter had acute visions

of the Daisy's nose in the Park—and, if Reidy really wanted to sell he might be of some use.

"I don't want to sell her," said Peter shortly, while Harrison, who had come up, muttered Hunt races in a delicate undertone. "I tell you, I don't want to sell her to you—even to win a race with," said Peter, and he smiled bitterly.

Mr. Clancy looked pained. "Who would race so unsafe an animal?" He then advanced a flood of subtle argument. "It would really oblige his customer, it would in that way oblige him—that was, of course, if Peter wished, as he said, to sell her."

"Damn rogues. Hunt race. Won twice," said Harrison in the same low tones.

Peter sat unmoved, letting the flood of persuasive words flow over him, but a strange light grew in his eyes and his brow cleared. Young Clancy, having said all he could, then inquired if he might run his eye over the mare once more. "Did you put her up?" he asked, looking up towards the stable.

"No, she's behind us, down by those trees," said Peter quietly, pointing towards Ballyleen.

"Oh, did you face out that way?" inquired young Clancy. "That's a terrible awkward place."

"It is," said Peter, "very awkward."

"And she got over it?" inquired Clancy, his eyes eager.

"She did indeed," said Peter.

Whereupon Clancy commenced again, jocosely this time, to endeavour to make his bargain.

Peter looked at him. "I tell you," he said, "she's not worth ten shillings."

Mr. Clancy looked smoothly dubious.

"But if you make a personal matter of it, I've told you I don't want to sell. Still, she has to go, and if you want her so much——"

That was just it, Clancy explained: as she had to go, he would like to take her to oblige both Peter and his own customer.

"Then," said Peter (quite a small audience had gathered round them), "if you will have a perfectly worthless animal, you can, if you care to; give me a ten-pound note, down—and you can have her, worthless as she is—directly."

Young Clancy hastily reft a greasy pocket-book from his chest and produced a greasier collection of one-pound notes, which he counted carefully and handed to Peter. This was most distinctly a bargain to close without argument. Behind his mask-like gravity the youth was laughing heartily at the man who threw away a mare because she was not fully trained.

"And—I would not let you have her," said Peter distinctly, looking with distaste at the notes, "but I owe you a turn over that good chestnut you let me have."

"He—was a nice horse," said young Clancy, faintly troubled.

"He was," said Peter, with emphasis. "A safe horse. Not a horse to get many falls off."

Here Harrison chuckled softly.

"No—o," said young Clancy, replacing the pocket-book, his gravity spreading inwards. Could his informants have deceived him and the chestnut be still at Ballydane? Peter's face was sweetly vacant; he felt this must be the case. Owing to a fortunate cold and consequent lack of work the over-boiled leg must have held; its breakdown lie still in futurity.

"I could lead the mare back this evening," he said, wondering how he could ask now for a luck penny. "Where will I get her?"

"Where I told you," said Peter quietly. "And, when you find her you may as well get a cart also, and send her on to the hounds, for she broke her neck down there at that big bank. . . . I told you—plainly—she wasn't worth ten shillings."

"Be—be—that's a damn shame," stuttered

young Clancy, under cover of the hearty outburst of laughter which arose. Every man among the listeners had some slight cause to wish him ill, and he was left alone. Then, having cleansed his soul of many words, Mr. Clancy proceeded to gaze after Peter with respect unmingled with resentment, and a lingering regret that they could not work together. "And I to take him for a fool!" he remarked, removing his hat to let the evening breeze play round his heated brow. "Though, after all, except for the shame of it, 'tis but ten pounds off the price of the chestnut." Having laid this plaster of comfort to a bruised soul he rode homewards, but for many months afterwards his temper was ruffled by a systematic offering of every defunct horse which the county produced—"as he gave such good prices for them."

Magee, who had been a silent spectator of the bargain, laid his hand upon Dawn's bridle as it was finished; he helped Peter down with deference—he even inquired how Dawn had gone with him.

After this episode Peter's icy manner to Tommy Clancy relaxed; he met him ever afterwards with calm good fellowship. Matters had been balanced between them.

## CHAPTER XIII

### HOW PETER CAUGHT A COLT AND WON A RACE

A COLLECTION of fishing apparatus strayed about the smoking-room at Ballydane; several flannel-paunched fly-books reposed upon the table; various types of casts wallowed in a china bowl full of water, and Peter, with the gravity of the occasion impressed on his face, drifted from book to bowl, selecting feverishly.

"Are you sure it's worth it, Cassidy?" he demanded of his faithful henchman, who was struggling with another bowl of water and a tangled casting-line.

"Didn't me uncle rise a throut like a colt there only lasht sphring pasht?" said Cassidy severely. "May the divil whip these bits of gut the way they do be twistin'—An' I meself," he continued, as he strove with the tangle, "I meself had a throut out of whin I was with Sir James, but he bate me round a bit of a snag

the schamer, an' wint off quite an' cool wid me casht in his snhout."

"That's two—in a year," said Peter, with reservation.

"That's two, no less," said Cassidy, inadvertently placing his hand on some loose flies; having absorbed one in his finger-tip, he tore the barb out recklessly and put the bleeding finger in his mouth. "That's two," he repeated, behind the injured finger, "but the dear knows there's flocks within in it. If you sat there of a fine night you'd see thim throwin' leps for the fly out of the wather, an' none of thim live insec's as nate as ye'r own. Though God knows," he added, as a bitter afterthought, "if they knew what matther was in sthore for thim they'd sthay below." Here he sucked again, noisily.



Cassidy with his injured finger.

Peter, without sympathy, proffered an anxious inquiry as to what flies he was to take. The Oon was a swift, silent river, too sulky for an unskilled fisherman to charm trout out of, and Peter possessed no desire to catch salmon; so,

hearing from Cassidy of a wondrous little river some miles away "wesht," he determined to spend a day there. He was going alone, leaving Cassidy to guide Carstairs, who was coming later and would certainly never have found his way.

"Shall I put on a March brown or a hare's ear?" inquired Peter, preparing to tie delicate knots in the filmy gut.

Cassidy, reserve in his face, bent over the flies, remarking that "the divil a hap'orth he knew of their names, but for himself he'd fancy a tasthe of colour," and he picked out a gaudy confection of orange and scarlet, which he averred to be much like "thim dhragoon flies ye'd see shkirtin' around in summer;" he then added a rider that "for himself he wasn't above a worrm, an' thought it the besht of all, besides bein' chaper."

After this, Peter chose his own stock; then, having bulged out his pockets with hooks, and adorned his cap with spare casts, he sent for his bicycle, binding rods and a landing-net along the bar. Cassidy eyed this last appendage with clear disfavour, declaring "there'd be no manner of use in it, let alone whin a man'd have hand fasht on a fish, how could he be sparin' time to use that? 'Twas better to take

a bit of a sthroke, an' whip the fish over ye'r head on to the bank."

Peter's hope of the colt-like fish began to wane; however, he kept to his net, tying it on with a grave glance at his adviser.

It was late April; soft clouded skies overhead, breath of spring in the air. The beds which the Bramah had once scratched in were gay with sweet narcissi and flaring scarlet anemones. From the green fields came the bleat of many lambs, the insistent answers of their anxious mothers. Merry voices, followed by the shrill squeak which heralds kitchen courtship, drifted up from the windows below the steep slope of grass. Peter sighed a little, looking out across the newly decked woods, a mazy lacework of tenderest green.

He had now to endure parting directions that "whin he had passed on to the left an' held Drinagh village to his right hand, he was to make for Muldooney's public—any man would direct him—and having left the wheel there, sthrike wesht across the fields till he'd hould an' ould ellum sthraight in his eye, an' then if he whipped easht a bit he'd hit the sthream sthraight."

"And you expected Mr. Carstairs to get there by those directions," observed Peter drily.

Cassidy indignantly remarked that the road was now as plain as his hand before him, and Peter departed with a confused idea that he was to leave his bicycle "in an ellum and hold a public in his eye." He whirred on through soft hedges, bare flower of white thorn and budding may, veil of tender netting green above him, as he rode past Woodholme woods ; here he grew thoughtful, looking into the gapped trees, standing so sparsely now, and sighed as he sped on. The miles fell swiftly backwards, until he reached the welcome haven of "Muldooney's public"—a gaunt thatched cottage standing at a trail of narrow crossing roads—then, laden with rod, net and basket, he struck off through the fields.

It was still early, the dew thick on the grass ; he passed through future meadows, emerald green to his ankles ; past sluggish trenches, with a pungent scent of bog-mint and drying flotsam about them, and, having with due caution kept the branches of a distant giant elm in his eye, found himself looking into a hollow between two slopes, dipping to a cloud of budding wood. Peter looked — shifted his rod and looked again, his remarks not of the class which look well written ; then, scarcely believing his

eyes, he strode on downward to where a narrow sluggish stream trailed feebly between grassy banks, occasionally mustering energy to growl over a barring rock, the green weed sweeping out like a mermaid's hair. The water was clear and brown; there was just wind enough to get the fly out, but there was nowhere to fish. With a brow resembling an active thunderstorm he finally unstrapped his rod and put it together, tweaking the line viciously. The reel's hoarse whir and the vision of his carefully chosen flies renewed hope: he recalled the colt-like trout and the other "schamer," still doubtless taking stream with the "casht in his shnout," and he determined to try.

Choosing a spot were the lazy stream was engaged in a faint argument with some stones, he cast, hooking plumb in the opposite bank; this required five minutes stormily worded patience to undo. Peter made up in vigour what he lacked in skill; he whipped again, until a tightening line set his heart throbbing; but the piece of old hoop which he landed was not encouraging. Having, in various spots, succeeded in catching a branch and further pieces of hoop, he began to find the stream too much for him. A long observation—taken flat

on his stomach—revealed the presence of fish, wagging defiant bodies in sheltered spots; so Peter rose, clambering into the wood to seek for better spots. Here he found that Cassidy's trout stream widened, gurgling with some energy into rapids and swift deeps, but any possibility of casting was vetoed by the branches lacing overhead.

It was at this point, his temper sadly soured, that Peter recalled Cassidy's advice and knew it was his only chance; he found a hook, and burrowed beneath stones, collecting juicy worms; one of which speedily danced in agile agony upon his hook, and presently swam with an ill grace in a brown-hued rapid.

It seemed in vain; Peter finally abandoned hope, taking a disconsolate seat upon the bank, his landing-net on the high ground behind him, his line dangling in the water: the pool was a likely one, with a rush of little waves and fussy currents, but Peter fell to thinking—of the past winter, the coming summer, of the hopes he had dared to hope, dead now for all time. He had done a foolish thing; he had lost his heart to the little blue-eyed girl whose mother would not even know him, who was herself, if rumour spoke truly, to be married to her cousin in the

autumn, and who, after months of friendliness, had suddenly commenced to treat him with icy reserve : to punish his presumption, no doubt, Peter ruminated bitterly. His thought slipped on to his fat, good-humoured cousin and big, good-humoured Harrison, whose summer lay as gold before them, and Peter Reidy's face grew very dark indeed, dark and wistful, the lap and gurgle of the little stream a soothing mournful dirge . . .

"Chkk!" went the line, whirring out beneath his careless fingers. Peter hurled himself to his feet; with a frantic exclamation and all sorrow forgot. Judging by the strain, the colt had swallowed his dangling worm. Just below the pool, the stream burrowed into a collection of half-drowned branches and honeycombed rocks, darned together with tangling weed—once into these he knew that another "schamer" would get free, so he kept his point up as the trout splashed and plunged, making short, swift rushes. He was a fine fish, nearly two pounds, and full of fight. Peter hopped feverishly upon the bank until he was able to reel slowly in, seeing the brown-mottled sides of his catch. But the sides of the river were steep, the landing-net far away; Peter groped vainly

behind him, searching for it. The fish began to gather renewed energy and work down for the rocks below him.

It was at this moment, full of despair, that Peter heard heavy footsteps coming along and, with the tail of his eye, perceived the vision of another rod borne out over his head. With impolite haste he called to the stranger to pick up the net and land his fish, adding with fervour that the place was damnably full of rock, that he could do nothing, and that he could not miss this "colt" of a trout . . .

The footsteps ceased, but he received no answer.

"Or hand me the net. You there!" thundered Peter sharply. "Oh, hurry up! Once he's among those branches, I'm done. He's a whopper!"

After a moment's silence, the net, firmly grasped, glided past his ear, followed by the stranger . . .

"Good—!" muttered Peter, nearly losing his fish, as he observed Lady Rochfort, clad in short tweeds and extra-sized boots, pass him, to poise her large person on a small rock, net in hand, while she charged him sharply not to look foolish and lose his fish. Now you cannot land an active fish in an awkward place, silently; in a minute the

little glen echoed to a war of directions as the brown trout splashed and fought. Once, I fear, Peter swore because the lady missed his fish by an inch; it is quite certain that on the same occasion Lady Rochfort denounced Peter as an idiot, and that neither heard the other. But it all ended with a swift swoop of the net, a speckled body fast in its depths, a wild whoop



Lady Rochfort, net in hand.

from Peter, and a rush of such violence on his part for his fish that the stout lady plumped off the rock into the stream.

"The best fish ever caught here," she remarked, wading out, undisturbed by the collision.

"Cassidy says his uncle caught one here as big as a colt," said Peter, putting an end to the brown trout's gaspings, and laying him on a bed of moss to be admired.

Lady Rochfort, scrambling up the bank remarked drily, that possibly Cassidy might—exaggerate; here she took up her rod, and Peter, awakening to the awkwardness of the situation and the dampness of the lady, commenced to stumble over apologies behind ingenuously pink cheeks.

"I could scarcely," said Lady Rochfort, taking up her rod, "refuse a request so—er—politely offered, nor could I see a good fish lost by an—" Here she paused, bit off a word, and walked on, leaving Peter baiting his hook. He chose worms with peculiar care, his enthusiasm slightly damped by the uncertainty of the word which Lady Rochfort had swallowed, when he became aware of that lady's daughter, trudging wearily along the bank, with a bottle full of worms in her small hands.

"You?" she observed, stopping in astonishment.

"Seems to be," said Peter hastily, trying to proffer a worm-filled hand.

Miss Rochfort, ignoring the hand, observed gloomily that her mother had advised her to take the short way across the fields, but that she could not resist the river, and that she was in a very great hurry—here she sat down on a stone; and further, with still greater gloom, that she considered worm-fishing positively disgusting.

"Oh, do you? But look here. Your mother landed him!" said Peter, pointing to the peaceful trout.

"What?" said the girl.

"Yes"—Peter cast forth his worm and was all eyes for it—"she was passing by and I swore at her a good deal, over my shoulder, and then she came down and landed him—and fell in—I bumped her—and there might be another—" he added, in a fisherman's whisper. "See where the eddy goes behind that rock. Cassidy says they're here in flocks."

Miss Rochfort, having observed unkindly that, if it were so, from her knowledge of the stream he must have caught the shepherd, watched Peter with undisturbed depression.

"Couldn't you wait a bit?" queried Peter, waggling his line with what he felt to be professional skill. "Carstairs is coming with lunch, and Harrison, and Kitty."

"Thanks," said Miss Rochfort icily, "but I have not a moment."

"I think that's all right about Kitty," added Peter; "I wouldn't, mention it to any one else but you won't tell."

Miss Rochfort returned, very chilly, that she was much flattered by the confidence, though

she scarcely understood the honour; and she rose.

"I saw it from the first," babbled Peter, too busy to feel snubbed. "*Was* that a tweak? And you know it's ripping. I believe in a fellow marrying young"—here he sighed. "And she can paint up the old place, and put glass in the windows, and clean the silver—for Harrison, and—"

"But why?" asked the girl, an expression of amazement on her small face. "Why, because you marry Miss Haldane, should she paint Mr. Harrison's glass and clean his old windows—and—"

"But—*I* marry! It's *him!*" said Peter ungrammatically. "I'm as proud of the match as if I were going to be married myself, which will be—never." Here he sighed and lost interest in his worm. "Isn't it fine for old Harrison? Don't you think so?"

"I think, I think," said Moira Rochfort, in a strange voice, "that it's the finest thing I've ever heard in my life. She's so nice—so pleasant—so—"

"And you mean to say you were juggins enough to think that it was me?" asked Peter, always over his shoulder.

"Yes," said Moira to her bottle of worms. "I thought—somehow—you were engaged, or nearly so—in England. And—yes, I was a—juggins—"

"And you'd have been equally delighted, I suppose," said Peter, becoming gloomy in his turn.

"No," said the girl, still confiding to the worms.



"Yes," said Moira to her bottle of worms.

"No—though I—am nearly done for—though—" her cheeks grew crimson, her voice failed.

At this moment Peter got a bite, but he dropped his rod and whirled round as one possessed. The worm-bottle having fulfilled its duty as confidant lay on the ground, and Moira Rochfort, wet-eyed and pink-cheeked, was running hurriedly along the narrow path. Ere Peter could collect his reeling

senses she had scaled the bank and was flying onwards in frantic pursuit of her fishing mother, who wanted fresh bait.

Peter picked up his rod mechanically, to find his worm gone. Then he carefully flung it out again, unbaited, and sat down heavily. He looked skywards through the mesh of youthful green; he let the croon of the river, a dirge no longer, go straight to his heart, and he sat on, possibly imagining that he was still fishing.

An hour later he was found by the others, still sitting on the damp bank; a rod trailing by his side and a speckled trout close by him. His expression was scarcely mortal.

"Did you ever see such a river, such a crawling thing to call a river?" declaimed Carstairs as he floundered down the bank, rod in hand.

"I—never—did," observed Peter in dazed tones. "Never—"

Here Cassidy, who had clearly suffered many insults as he had led his party across, saw the trout and pounced upon it. "Didn't I tell ye?" he said, "Flocks of thim no less, and big as young bullocks! Who'll be talkin' to me now to-night whin ye claps a tooth through him?"

Peter swept the trout into the basket. "Cassidy," he said solemnly, "people ought to

pay millions to fish here. But as for that fellow, I mean to have him stuffed."

"Shtuffed! God save ye!" said Cassidy, picking up the rod and Moira's bottle of worms.

The speckled trout still swims in a glass-case at Ballydane, examined with interest by fishermen, whose queries as to why a river trout, weight under two pounds, should have been thought worthy of stuffing are very difficult to answer. Peter's usual reply that it is not a trout but a "colt" is received with scorn.

It was about a week later that the Tullanbye races were held. The racecourse is perched on a steep hillside, looking down at a stretch of pasture-land. A wooden stand runs its bare planks heavenwards, creaking protests as the crowd surged up on to it, and a roughly palisaded enclosure is ring and paddock combined. The crowd seethed and surged; humming like bees, gathering round the long tables with their chaste decorations of pallid pigs' feet, saffron buns suffering from an irruption of currants and crossed spirals of striped sugar-stick. The drink tents drove a merry trade, the desire to back winners congesting the traffic at the narrow entrances. "Dyer's mare is in great form. Safe to win, she is. Didn't they pull the head off her only lasht week and she spheedin' in

like the wind, kapin' her for to-day? I tell ye I'll have a shillin' on Clancy's mount; he's the man to sthick on a horse."

A fringe of cars and traps edged the ropes by the winning-post. One car was horseless, its shafts resting on the back of a cart in front. There was a horse in this cart, but he was patiently eating a portion of hay. He was a very old animal, with over-developed joints and perforated knees, and his owner, one Michael Tracy, had assured Miss Rochfort that "the baste'd sthand quite an' convenient for a week." Peter had driven his motor over, and had left it and Cassidy—the latter with some misgivings—hearing a hearty greeting from one of that worthy's friends, coupled with a suggestion that they should not get drunk too early or "they'd miss half the divarsion." Peter then proffered a slight suggestion to his chauffeur to keep an eye on the footman, and left.

Miss Rochfort had come racing with her father, who, before he buried his mild little person in the congested paddock, had invited Peter to lunch with his daughter. Now there are better places to lunch on than on outside car; there are also better places to argue on, and, judging by the heated cheeks of the two occupants, this was their principal occupation.

"You won't see anything," said Peter hotly.

"I see some food, and—I'm hungry," said Moira Rochfort pathetically.

"Oh!" said Peter, spearing a pie.

Luncheon was spread on the well, engaged in a spirited contest with a lively south wind. The wind, or the argument, had driven a bright pink into Miss Rochfort's cheeks, making her distressingly pretty. She now observed that directly after lunch she wished to look at Con Cregan's mare Mavourneen, and began to eat; but at this moment the wind dived under the tablecloth, upset the salad dressing into the apple-pie, and whooped off in high spirits.

Peter scooped some apples, vinegar and cream on to his plate, and continued his argument. It was long and varied, and, something like Cassidy's hare, whenever it "shtopped wint sthraight on backwards." He was lacking in eloquence, as most men are at important moments, but he was distressingly clear. Moira Rochfort listened, her cheeks paling and her eyes very wide, and she tried to speak lightly, with the success of a leaf endeavouring to float up stream, and was undetected by Peter.

"You'll ride such a shocking race if you get cross," she observed at last, quite irrelevantly.

Peter returned, with some asperity, that she knew he couldn't ride races, and was merely entering old Glandore for the fun of the thing. He had no chance.

Moira said "No?" and if Peter had not been so agitated he might have noticed that she helped herself largely to salad dressing with pastry, and tried to conceal her pleasure at the taste. Then she spoke quickly. "Oh, he must know it was all quite impossible," here she revealed a dimple. "But, if he won the flat-race on old Glandore she would listen to him, listen—no more—"

"Thank you," said Peter quietly. "Is that true?"

"As true, as true," said Moira emphatically, "as that we're sitting here—Oh!—" For the world slid from beneath them as the old horse in front moved, and they fell earthwards rapidly, to an accompanying hail of luncheon.

"Doesn't seem to be much stability in the metaphor," observed Peter, helping the girl to her feet and rubbing some butter and mud from her ruffled person.

"Michael Tracy, why did you tell me your horse would not move?" cried Miss Rochfort furiously to the owner of the cart. "You've got

all the mustard on your sleeve"—this to Peter—"and father loves it."

Michael Tracy assured her penitently that "he niver knew th' ould schamer to move of his own accord before, divil a lie in it, an' be dam to his andhrewmatins!"—here he beat the horse severely. "Reachin' afther the hay the wind swhep from him he was," he said, "an' I kindly enough to pull a handful out of Paddy Regan's rick an' we passin'. An' afther all he'll pretind 'tis tired he is goin' home."

The car was righted and again poised. All temptation of Paddy Regan's hay was removed from the horse's way, leaving him standing sadly bereft, doubtless making resolutions never to move again without urging, or perhaps thinking of the homeward road with whiskey-backed blows falling on his gaunt back.

The roar of the bookmakers rose hoarsely; some one rang a cracked bell.

"I must see Mavourneen," declared Moira, ending the argument, as she burrowed into the crowd. "Then we'll go down to the regulation to see them jump."

Peter, remarking that he held her to her promise, went ahead, cleaving a way through the mass of people, dodging an occasional bare pig's

foot which rocketted past, pausing to observe the zest which accompanied the pelting of a scarlet-clad Aunt Sally, its helmet drunkenly on one side, and at last finding a narrow gate which admitted them to the stand. Here a harassed, but over-kindly official mounted guard, swinging the gate in answer to running comments from a superior official who watched the crowd flow by. "Let in Mrs. Hartigan, Tom. Let in Martin Doolan an' his wife. Pass in Misther Doolan. Sure, of course, Mr. Heggarty,—why not? Tom, let in Mr. Heggarty"; and so sandwiched by Heggarty, Mr. and Mrs. Doolan, and several others whose haste seemed to point to a lack of invitation, Moira and Peter passed in.

The paddock was thick with men and horses. They spent some anxious moments diving among the equine hopes of the day ere they found Cregan's mare, a long, low animal with a restless eye, being saddled in a corner. Her tail was clamped in tightly, the prominence of her ribs spoke of many gallops; but she bore the stamp of blood, and, as her owner surged restlessly round her, a saddle in his hand, he proffered information concerning her breeding.

"Isn't she the picther, Miss Moira?" he

declaimed. "There'll be bits of sthuff agin' her, but she'll sicken thim all. Wasn't her dam's father Birdcatcher, an' she herself an Evangelist. I bought th' ould mare above at a Dublin auction, they thinkin' she was pasht all but a bit of work an' the hounds, and haven't I had this one from her and two more since—though of coorse nothin' to this one that's here ; 'tisn't every day you'll see an Evangelist down in Cahirvally. Only I wishes to God," he added, looking round, "that I'd a betther man above on her. However, there's some that'd take a haul at her, an' he won't. Hasten out Jamsey Maher there!" he added to an attendant son.

Duly hastened, the rider, his dingy jacket flapping loosely about him, appeared from the refreshment tent with a black bottle beneath his arm. He was a cousin of the owner, and, when slightly drunk, had ridden with some success in various farmers' hunt races; but this was different; so much so that horrible qualms concerning the mass of brushwood, rail, and ditch, called a regulation, assailed him. Having looked nervously at the restless mare, and still more nervously towards the course, he proceeded to "borry" a glass, filling it from the black bottle with what Peter observed with horror to be that

decoction of brandied syrup and logwood termed port by Irish grocers.

Cregan, the owner, adjusted the cloths with skill and pride, observing that "the fortin' of a five-pound note" might be laid on his mare with safety, and further dwelling on the "sickenin'" she would deal to other competitors. "Let ye rise her now at the big leps, Jamsey," he commanded, as he thrust his unwilling cousin into the small saddle, "and hould her in on the flat till ye have the lasht of the poshts rounded, an' whip hell out of her thin, for she do be a bit sour at times whin ye'd ax her to sthretch out."

Jamsey Maher, observing dejectedly that "he was a dam fool to be above on her at all," reached a clamorous hand for the port bottle, and, having finished the contents, rode forth, some final instructions as to the necessity of "risin' her" trailing in his wake. His opponents did not look very formidable, for the twenty-pound stake could not tempt the Curragh from its lair; but the riders' faces were not so painfully flushed nor their eyes so full of sour fear.

The crowd surged about the horses anxiously, each man seeking his friend. "I'd misthrust Donolly's mare," said one in Peter's ear; "she's

favourin' her foremost leg," while another observed loudly that "Jamsey Maher was sthiff with the whishkey he had in to dhrive the fright from him, an' was rowlin' above on the mare's back." Peter put a fiver on Mavourneen, bringing the price from sixes to two with a feverish bound, and they dived again through the congested gate. Having waited to see a preliminary in which Mavourneen, loosely handled, turned round and kicked the fence with some accuracy, and was removed with haste by her rider. She was then walked towards the starting point with Mr. Jamsey Maher appealing wildly to the starter "for God's sake, to let them off before the dhrink left him."

Peter urged haste upon Miss Rochfort, and they ran across the uneven ground to the regulation. Mavourneen's owner, cursing Jamsey Maher volubly, accompanying them half-way, and parting from them with an explanation that he must be close to the winning-post to lead his mare in "afther she had it won."

The regulation fence presented the appearance of an overcrowded rookery ; a black crowd clinging to its wings, small boys thrusting forth eager heads to see the horses arrive ; a good-humoured policeman proffering occasional remarks to the

effect that "if them sons of schamers did not hould back they'd frighten the horses," and the said sons not even listening.

A roar from the stand having proclaimed that the start was accomplished, the horses swept into sight, Mavourneen a decisive last. She swerved at the first fence, a narrow fly-bank, then, following her leaders, lurched over it sideways, landing her rider on her neck. They came on towards the regulation—a faint yell from the centre ground denoting that Mr. Cregan objected to his mare's position—came with the flutter of silks, the thunder of hoofs, all the panting, struggling life fighting together which has power to move men's souls. Roselin, the favourite, a little bay, swept over with a mighty spring, eliciting wild cheers from the onlookers; while the good-tempered member of the Constabulary, who was now displacing small boys to look over himself, remarked enthusiastically that "thim jockeys were great min an' to hould the legs at all."

Still last, pulling hard, came Mavourneen, soured by restraint and bad handling; Jamsey Maher's eyes starting from his head, his form swaying vaguely; he was clearly extremely drunk, yet not drunk enough to drown his fear.

As he fumbled at the bridle, the mare swerved awkwardly, laying back her ears; then, intent on following the horses ahead, she put in a final rush at the fence, caught the rail with her fetlocks and turned over handsomely, flinging her rider clear. Mr. Jamsey Maher having landed with a sounding thump, on his back, remained stunned for a moment, and then he was dragged aside by willing hands, who casually remarked that "he was surely dead, the thump and the grocer's port were too much for him." He opened feeble eyes, ready to swear vengeance on the Evangelist mare; but his speech was checked by much port departing with haste from his system. Mr. Jamsey Maher was very hideously sea-sick. To him, purple-visaged, breathless, came the mare's owner, raining curses as he sped, for Mavourneen was now pursuing her leaders, jumping with a maddening precision and galloping like clockwork.

"May the divil himself toast ye for a fool, Jamsey," he pealed, as he reached the convulsed man.

"'Tis the lungs," said a sympathetic but unmoved spectator; "cracked within him they are wid the belt he hit the ground; ye'd hear it in Cork."

"For a dam' fool," repeated Mr. Cregan with awful fury. "Here, one of ye skhim over for a priest; he might be gone any minute! Isn't it the price of ye?" he thundered on to the prostrate jockey. "I saw ye. Ye ruz her three times afore ye come to th' fince, an whin ye come to ye didn't rise her at all, an' now ye'r flingin' away ye'r heart's blood."

"Be dam, to ye an' ye'r mare!" piped Mr. Maher, with feeble bitterness, in the intervals of his throes.

Peter hid the awful spectacle from Moira, waiting until they were running back to the winning-post to explain the nature of the illness. They were just in time to see the favourite, whose owner had a forty-pound stake in his eye, come in a comfortable last, and the finish fought out between a quartette of unknown animals, whose riders all objected to each other immediately afterwards. Finally, as Cassidy remarked with satisfaction, "the horse that won it was bate, an' the third horse took the race, be raison of the fine liar he had above on him."

It was then Peter's turn. Now, the flat-race course was a model of pure torment. It rounded weirdly about unguarded posts, the turn for home being almost at right-angles to the winning-post.

With an awkward horse, it was quite possible to miss the ropes marking the run in and find oneself in the crowd. To avoid this, the riders always went wide with a sweeping turn, so as to come well opposite the straight before they made their last effort ; this turn also avoided some rough, uneven ground.

Peter's mount, Glandore, was an old thoroughbred which he bought from Dick Doyle, still an excellent hunter, but quite past flat-racing. He was a shabby little brown, possessing several lame legs, and a look of bull-dog endurance. Peter, radiant in a new jacket, rode down beside the favourite, a good-looking chestnut mare, bestridden by a well-known gentleman rider, imported for the occasion.

" I'll have my work cut out for me to go round this circus," observed Casey sulkily. " You can batter round a post on one leg with that little horse, but this mare wants room."

As they rode on to the course, Peter encountered Mr. Jamsey Maher, very pallid and green, being assisted homewards by Mr. Cregan ; the two, quite reconciled, jointly thirsting for the blood of the man who had sold the port " that was near to be a man's death, an' lost the mare her race."

Old Glandore moved with the freedom of a badly oiled mechanical toy in the canter; Butterfly sweeping past the stand with a swinging rush which set the crowd cheering, and her rider swearing. A few minutes later they started, the chestnut tearing off as if black ruin was at her fiery heels; then being pulled back with severity to keep her from bolting. The others hustled and bumped to save a few inches at the first post, language flowing pleasantly; Peter, as Glandore softened, joining them to hustle with the rest.

As they passed the stand, Peter saw that the crowd, from old custom, surged right across the proper course, covering the sharp turn for home, leaving the higher ground for the horses. Peter considered as he pounded on, but as they galloped again for the yelling fringe of humanity, a sudden thought hit him in the face. If he could turn sharply at the last post, he would save lengths. There was, of course, the chance of missing the ropes completely, for the crowd hid the ground, but he must take that. He looked up, taking sharp measure of stand and winning-post, then wheeled the old horse straight into the surging crowd, yelling as he did so. No other people on earth could have

saved themselves as this crowd did, flying from fevered shouts. "Here's one of thim!" they shrieked. "Dead we all are! Run, let ye!" But the lane opened, somehow; he saw quick visions of raining oranges, of old women plucked from beneath his horse's feet, he felt soft touches against his knees, the old horse pounding steadily. "Hurry on. God save ye, but ye have it won!" shrieked a voice in his ear. "Kape wesht, man dear. Wesht to the sthand house," Peter had a flitting view of what appeared to be Cassidy's face, very flushed, but he swung in response, aided by a sounding thump which fell on Glandore's quarter, to hit the ropes exactly. Then his whip came out, the whalebone singing about the old horse's sides. Mildly surprised, Glandore extended his stiff limbs, while Peter, looking behind, saw Butterfly sweeping after him like a tornado, going two strides to his one. The hoofs drummed closer, but Peter, sitting down to a frenzy of ungraceful riding—which kept him occupied and had no effect on his horse—got home by half a length.

"Why didn't you keep nearer?" Peter asked the defeated Mr. Casey as they rode to scale.

Casey remarked, severely, that he had come down to ride races, not to take part in the Victoria Cross and bending competitions in a Gymkana.

"I don't think I killed any one," said Peter, thoughtfully, watching his number go up.

Mr. Casey observed that they were under *his*



Michael Tracy's account of his aunt lying dead below, bawling for dear life.

feet like rabbits as he rode the way cleared for them, every one telling him to keep wide or he would do a mischief; while as for Peter—the well-known rider eyed the swarms outside, and unbent sufficiently to smile. Peter weighed, and

fled, coated, to a waiting car. Here he found Miss Rochfort, consumed by laughter, listening to Michael Tracy's account of how "his a'nt was lyin' dead below, bawlin' for dear life, an' her oranges ate be the gorsoons," adding cheerfully "that if she was took he'd get a bit of money, and the dear knew she was old enough."

Peter dispensed some silver, and Moira whiskey, and they looked at each other.

"Now—you'll listen—" said Peter squarely. "You said you would—if I won."

"But — I never said — I wouldn't if you — didn't," said Miss Rochfort, taking a sudden pink-cheeked interest in the trodden grass. Peter became possessed with a sudden certainty that the Tullanbye races were being held in Paradise, and the blue of the sky seemed to dwell in Moira's eyes. She was listening, with attention and a scared face, when Tracy returned with the empty tumbler to announce, with some regret, that "the ould wan only wanted a glass an' was gay below, lambastin' every mortial soul she'd see atin' an orange; faith, she'd hit the Earl of Cahir himself an' he went out suckin' wan."

This contingency appeared remote, and at this

moment Lord Rochfort and the yellow horse appeared simultaneously, Moira bidding Peter goodbye with curious reserve and a trembling mouth. Peter returned, with a suppressed manner and incoherent statements, to Ballydane. His homeward drive was enlivened by the presence of Cassidy, distinctly drunk, chanting his master's praises in over-loud tones, and full of desire to quarrel with Harris, the chauffeur, whom he denounced as "a mane man," and a mile or two further as "a mane skhinned bosthoon," though not able to explain why. Finally he went to sleep on the chauffeur's shoulder, to awake near Ballydane full of friendship to all men, also apologising for "the taste of whiskey that whipped the head from him."

Peter's accounts to his people were strangely confused; Magee was too proud of his home-trained horse to proffer comment on the race, and it remained to Cassidy, in the heated intervals of brushing clothes, to recount the adventures to an admiring kitchen audience—How "Misther Pether, success to him, had dhruv the divil out of the ould horse, divin' in amongst the crowd for all the world like a wather dog chasin' a sthick." How he, Cassidy, was the real reason of his master's success, having shown him

the "way wesht whin the two was near to be losht"; and a further graphic description of the dead and dying left in the track, all detailed circumstantially, chanted to a correct chorus of gods and saints' names. "Faix ye'd nearly hear the bawls they let here," observed Cassidy thoughtfully, as he finished his pile and agreed to help the housemaid with her hot-water cans. "An' why the likes of him'd be thramplin' min' an' womin' for the sake of twinty pound is beyond me knowledge."

Peter, lost in thought upstairs, could have explained—though perhaps foolishly.

## CHAPTER XIV

### HOW PETER GOT HIS WAY

JUNE sunshine, dipping westward in a soft, flecked sky; dabs of woolly white across the stretch of blue-hued air; hedges veiled in dust. Peter Reidy sat on a grass bank, holding his horse by its bridle, but paying no attention to the animal as it tore off mouthfuls of dry, dusty grass, chewing them to a jar of steel bits. Peter's attitude was that of attention; every faint sound brought him rapidly to his feet, to subside again with impatient sighs and an unresigned expression. His suit of blue serge was not suitable for the saddle, his tie was aggressively new, and the toes he burrowed into the dust were nipped by patent leather; also his face was pale and his eyes shone.

There was nothing to hear, save the voiced hush of summer; some faint voices some fields away; the mechanical click of a rake as it rose and fell across the drying grass; further off a mowing machine whirred, monotonous "Hups"

and "Wyas" marking its course. There was no house in sight, but beyond a belt of thick thorns a dog barked sharply, and once the cluck of disturbed fowl was followed by shrill rating and a child's high-pitched squawl as judgment overtook it. All sounds merged into the stillness, but Peter waited vainly for the sound he listened for. A stream gurgled inside the bank; the soft scent of meadowsweet drifting to his nostrils, he took off his hat, for his head ached from the sun's glare, and heaved a sigh of purest impatience; then replaced his hat, having hurriedly smoothed his hair, and eyed, with manifest disfavour, a passing donkey-cart which crawled by.

Then there came the distant clump, clump of a large horse, moving slowly, and the rattle of wheels. He could see the trail of following dust beyond the turn in the narrow road. Peter shot to his feet, breathing fast, as the Rochforts' carriage, with blinds drawn close, lumbered into view, the old yellow horse roaring laboriously, his coat damp orange.

Peter suddenly occupied the centre of the road, and uttered a loud "Hi!" the yellow horse stopping with decision of his own accord. Then Peter, speaking with red cheeks, very quickly and without any stops, announced that

"his horse had a nail in its hoof and he couldn't get it out and he'd be greatly obliged to Conlon if he would help him."

The Rochfort's coachman slowly shed a darned rug, and, with a parting word of warning to the yellow horse "not to shtir on his life," climbed stiffly down; tendering advice and lamenting the absence of a necessary "pinchers" as he came. As he bent his ancient back inquiring as to "which foremosht leg it was," Peter, abandoning all interest in the nail, darted across the road, lit on the box-seat of the carriage, and laid the whip across the yellow horse's back with a sounding thud. When Conlon raised his head from a scrutiny of an unhurt hoof, the carriage was a rocking blur of dust, with grey-clad shoulders and a pot-hat visible in its midst.

"May God Almighty protect me!" remarked the old man heavily, hobbling to the centre of the road. "But the sun has the sinses burnt from him."

Never since his first breaking-in had the yellow horse been so troubled; the drive was to him an evil dream of falling whip, chucking bit, loud-voiced cries, and endless dusty roads beneath his heavy hoofs, all with his roars rising in bitter protest and the old carriage rocking at his unkempt heels. Peter never turned his

head; his face was set, and he urged his steed with all the force he was master of. Once he thought he heard a shrill note from the carriage, but, as it was not repeated, he took no notice; he had expected silence. The yellow horse was forced to a last lurching flight down a steep hill, and was suddenly pulled up, dripping, at the gate of a tiny church. A little grey building, squatting forlornly in a dank grassed churchyard, with lichen-spotted gravestones bowing unevenly to each other. It was away in a patch of loneliness, not a house within sight.

Their arrival was clearly expected, for Carstairs, with a pink tie and white buttonhole, carefully dressed, and a very young clergyman were leaning against the gate-post, discussing, with Saxon horror, a slight littering of bones mingling with the gravel on the path, and which pointed to overcrowded dead. They sprang forwards as the carriage dashed into sight, Carstairs declaiming fussily as to the lateness of the hour, and declaring that they had given Peter up.

Peter jumped down, announcing something incoherently. He dusted his hat and boots, smoothed his hair anxiously. Carstairs, pulling out a white silk handkerchief, dusted also, dodging round Peter with a critical eye. He

explained as he did so that the motor car they had driven over in had jammed and was lying half a mile away, so Peter must go on in the Rochforts' landau and he would drive.

Peter revolved his dusted self before his friend, and having received an approving nod, he sprang to the carriage door. Then he pulled it open, the afternoon's sunshine reflected in his eyes, his cheeks white. "Come now—dearest—" he said softly into the ancient vehicle.

"May I ask, young man, what is the meaning of this?" observed the Dowager Lady Rochfort urbanely, proceeding to get out; a slim upright little figure, muffled in old lace, hung about with old jewels, her eyes glittering. The yellow horse roared on; silence fell on the others, a terrible silence.

Peter stammered, voiceless, the day's golden beauty grey to him; his despairing glance raked the dingy carriage. "You!" he said at last, "You! then—Oh, where is Moira?"

"Moira? I begin to see." The old lady eyed his tense face. She explained quickly how she had found the carriage at the door ready to take Moira upon some fool's errand concerning a horse, and knowing the errand could wait had got in, meaning to fetch her niece later, as she knew there was no hurry.

"Oh, none—none," said Peter bitterly.

The Dowager crossed the path and went inside the gate, where a small alder flung a dissected shadow; here she sat down on a flat tombstone She looked with careful attention at the waiting men, the young clerygman, at the open door of the church. "So—it appears—that you ran away—with me," she said at last.

"If I'd been born in time I might have been glad to get the chance," said Peter, with icy gallantry.

The Dowager looked at him. "With me—with me—" she repeated. "I was asleep and was awakened by the noise, and the pace"—she pointed to the heaving horse—"then I knew there was—something—but I saw you, and remained—quiet—" Here the Dowager lost control of her emotions, and her unrestrained cackle rang out across the graveyard. It was catching; Peter, with a suspicion of feminine hysteria, suddenly subsided on another tombstone and joined in. Here was a scheme which had gone most strangely "agley."

The sunshine streamed about them; the little church was dim and empty as they laughed.

"Peter! Peter!" A figure dropped over the crumbling wall and sped stumbling across the mounds—a little breathless figure, with a

squashed hat, covered with trails of bramble and encased in several layers of dust. "Peter! I came down—to find the carriage—gone, after all. Grannie took it, and I've got no bicycle—I ran all the way—across the fields, and—" here Moira saw and heard—"and—oh, Peter, you're laughing," wailed the tired girl, suddenly casting herself down on to a mound and hiding her hot face. Peter rose and flew to her; the Dowager fell to admiring the inscription on her tombstone, and Carstairs and the clergyman looked at the dipping sun. There was a slight pause, cut across by a pleading voice, and when Moira came across she was smiling broadly. "So—he ran away with you, Grannie?" she said.

"At full gallop," said the old lady pleasantly. "I have always wished to be eloped with. Now it has come to pass. And now"—she suddenly swept Moira to her side—"Now, you two, what is to be done? As you are found out."

"Grannie," said Moira softly, touching the thin old hands.

"Grannie," said Peter audaciously. "Just that."

"Peter," said a voice from the road.

"My father!" said Peter weakly, as he turned to see his father and Cassidy driving up in a small pony-trap.

The Dowager looked, and remarked that the party was getting quite pleasant: it was—for a moment later, Lord Rochfort wheeled round the corner, and alighted, blank with astonishment; Peter observing bitterly that none of the invitations to his wedding seemed to have gone astray. It was an unfrequented country road, yet it appeared to be the only way to anywhere. Moira tried feverishly to get behind her grandmother on the flat tombstone, but, seeing no place, skirted actively to the shelter of a bowing headstone and peered over it. Lord Rochfort was a mild man, but when he found his mother and only daughter encamped in a graveyard, saw an open church door lending colour to the suspicion of an elopement, a possible bridegroom and best man very smartly clothed, attended by a clergyman, and finally his only horse gasping outside, he gathered voice to speak—and ask questions. It was the Dowager, from her lowly seat, who gave a full account of the abduction, with such power that her son turned away and fell to chuckling softly, and Moira peered goblin-like from her shelter.

Meantime the hour waned, and the yellow horse, which had recovered sufficiently to eat, was still not at all likely to catch the evening

train unless all haste was made. At this point Peter, waxing desperate, demonstrated the country's irreparable loss in not having secured him for Parliament. He stood on the gravel path, the flood of his eloquence pouring through the still evening air, and had he been an orator, men must have swayed to his words as reeds to the wind. Little Carstairs, in fact, sought support from a crumbling vault, where he bent in mingled amazement and ecstasy, and Cassidy muttered "God save ye!" or "Success, begob!" at decent intervals. It is true that the eloquence savoured a good deal of the chase, but it was not the worse for that. Lord Rochfort listened without a word; the Dowager nodded here and there, waving her claw-like hands; and Moira's pretty little face popped up and down from behind its grey shelter. When Peter stopped at last from want of breath, the young parson said absently, "Case for the crown, m'lord," and Lord Rochfort, moving forward, observed dubiously that it was very prettily put, but "M'lady intended Moira to marry elsewhere—in fact she was almost engaged—to her cousin." He looked at the headstone inquiringly—nothing but a hat was visible.

The Dowager made some remark beneath her

breath, and, she always denies it, but she sniffed tearfully.

"And you?" said Lord Rochfort gently, to his daughter behind the stone, "And Dick—?"

"Oh, father!—Dick!" Moira left the tombstone to cast a glance across the still country; its fervour might have penetrated even Dick Saunders' armour of self-confidence. She saw the black gulf which lay behind her. "Oh—father," she said again, and ran to Peter, who clutched her hand with the awkwardness of strong emotion, and looked appealingly at the Dowager.

It was then that the Dowager, from her lowly seat, took the ordering of things upon herself. Declaring, in her refined old voice, that Dick Harrison should never marry her granddaughter, that the wedding should come off now, and that she would bear the brunt of future battle. Here her son looked very doubtful; but he also looked at his mother, and on at Peter and Moira, and then with a low-voiced remark that, after all, people possessed only one life, and deepening its effect with an expression which suggested that he could have gladly spared that allotted to him, Lord Rochfort consented, and was promptly swept towards the church. His mother, shooting to her feet, clamoured sudden protest as to

legality and difference of religion, and its being a church, and a mere boy to marry—here she eyed the young clergyman with open disfavour. Woman-like, she was a little nervous now that she had done as she wished, but was assured by that youth that his licence would marry her —and a Chinaman—on a masthead at midnight —if she wished it, so great were its powers, and then fled, quelled by her eye, to robe himself. And further reassured by Peter, who was taking his bride along in most unorthodox manner, that he'd arranged for everything, and that Moira had wished for it. Peter's advance was then checked by the altar rails, and a back view of his young friend the parson taking a header into a surplice, while the Dowager murmured that he was a young man with resource as she proceeded to arrange her granddaughter's hair. Cassidy and Mr. Reidy brought up the rear, the latter assuring his henchman that he'd catch it from Father Pat for coming into a church when he told him of it.

"God save ye," said Cassidy, entering a pew— "whin I does."

So it came to pass that Lord Rochfort gave his runaway daughter to Peter, and the Dowager and Mr. Reidy acted as best man and bridesmaid

respectively, to the total extinction of Carstairs, who looked mournfully on. Also that the ceremony was rudely interrupted about the second "I will!" by Peter suddenly remembering that he was not at all likely to catch the train, and spinning round to entreat Cassidy to take something with four legs and gallop to Ballydane for another motor. Cassidy, announcing audibly that "he'd untackle the ould yellow horse an' whip hell out of him to the house," arose, blessed them, and vanished; subsequent sounds of galloping hoofs drifting in at the open door. And Peter went on with being married. It is not quite definite whether it was the Dowager or the bride who giggled openly during this interruption; judging by the uncertainty of the next responses, it might have been Moira. But it was finally finished, a damp book was found beneath the pulpit cushion, and Moira signed away her aristocratic surname with a cheerful face and trembling hand; her small face touched with the great happiness which is sorrow's twin sister.

They came outside then into the little churchyard, and stood among the crooked tombstones; the setting sun bathing the sky in gold. The peace of the June evening held the world, distant lowing of cows, hum of late workers,

buzz of hurrying winged beetles, soft scent of mown grass. They stood silently, until the peace was broken by the heated snort of a motor ; and as they ran to look, Peter's car shot round the corner on one wheel, dived for the opposite wall, re-




Peter's car shot round the corner on one wheel.

covered, and made devious hasty way towards them.

" The sorra a sign of ye'r dhriver," announced Cassidy, as he hurled his breathless, dusty self from the car. " So I knew I was near sure of the

ways an' I come meself. But be raison of being a bit awkward, I'd say there was a few accidents behind me. I *knows* Mikey Harty's ass and cyar is in the big trinch," he added thoughtfully, "for he wint aside that aisy I had to knock him. But I'd say he'd climb out; an' ye've just time to catch the thrain, for I sint a man galloping to Oonagh to hold it. I'm afeard, ye'r lordship," he added, "that ye'r horse 'll be apt to die. Ye'd hear the roars of him here, whin I'd done with him; but sure ye wouldn't begrudge him."

"Oh—no," said Lord Rochfort drily.

Peter and Moira said swift goodbyes, the girl's eyes dim, Peter's sublimely triumphant, and flung themselves into the car, vanishing in a trail of dust and petrol straight into the golden west.

The Dowager, who had quite lost her head, shed her shoes and cast them in their wake. Carstairs, still smarting from a sense of having been overlooked, flung handfuls of small bones and gravel as an equivalent for rice, and the young parson, having nothing else, cast his shovel hat.

Then they all stood silent, with the reaction of a past excitement.

"They'll be happy," said the Dowager, watching Mr. Reidy pick up her small shoe, while she balanced on one foot.

"And now," observed Lord Rochfort, with grim humour, "I have got to go—home."

He looked at the blur of dust representing his daughter, at his forlorn horseless carriage, and he smiled. There are some cases in which absolute hopelessness brings courage.

"I," said his mother briskly, "am going with you. Mr. Reidy shall drive me in his pony-cart. We shall want him. I would not," she said, clambering into the little cart, "miss this for all my diamonds. We are going to talk to her ladyship."

"God save ye!" said Cassidy, with soft emphasis, as they started.



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